

# PERSE PLAYBOOKS

NO. 3. PLAYS AND POEMS BY BOYS OF  
THE PERSE SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE.



CAMBRIDGE:  
W. HEFFER & SONS LTD.  
1913

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PERSE PLAYBOOKS

No. 3



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No. 3. PLAYS AND POEMS BY BOYS OF  
THE PERSE SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE.

With a PREFACE by W. H. D. ROUSE, Litt.D.,  
and an Essay,  
“PLAYWRIGHTS OR PLAYWRITERS?”  
By H. CALDWELL COOK.

Reddere qui voces iam scit puer et pede certo  
signat humum, gestit paribus colludere, et iram  
colligit ac ponit temere, et mutatur in horas.

*Horace : Ars Poetica.*

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## PREFACE

BY THE HEADMASTER

I have no doubt many will say that all this is dreaming, and in a sense much of it is : but it is the kind of dream that may easily come true. A good deal of it has already come true : and if some intelligent person were to hand us a few thousand pounds, in five years a good deal more would come true, because the dream is only to co-ordinate under one plan, with one central idea, the work of a number of persons who have been working separately. The dream has come true in parts, and all that remains is to put the parts together.

If this could be done, it would at once appear that the terms elementary and secondary apply to stages, and not to social classes. The earlier years of this system would be true education in the elements, and this would lead directly to either an art or a craft on the one hand ; or, on the other, through the University to a profession. Being adaptable, it would suit every child, and the sole question would be, What is the child fit for ? All children of all classes might, if desired, be taught together until the children's various abilities should sort them out, not into social groups, but into intellectual and physical groups. At present, so-called elementary schools do not prepare pupils for the so-called secondary schools, nor do they prepare them for life : they have the faults of the middle class schools without their merits.

To establish a system of true education would be very costly, but it would be worth all that could be spent upon it. Children so brought up would not grow up with the belief that society consists of classes whose interest it is to eat each other, like

so many Kilkenny cats; it would be natural to them to give and take, to combine, and to sacrifice for the general good. Politicians and agitators would find their occupation gone, for ignorance and malice are the culture they thrive in. And costly though it would be, the whole thing would cost less than the money wasted in the last few strikes.

If money could be got, all other difficulties would solve themselves. The idea suggested below, that the school should be a park, may be applied to a whole colony of schools. Machines have spoilt the life of our country because we have become the slaves of machines; let us use the mammon of unrighteousness. Suppose we secure outside the city of Vanity Fair an estate of five hundred acres, and fill it with all the buildings and plant necessary for five thousand children, rich and poor, whom we may bring by electric trams out of their slums and their villas, to live a natural life until the time comes to sleep. Indeed, it would be wise economy to keep them altogether, for they get no good from their homes as a rule, and parental responsibility is only a phrase with large classes of parents. Here in our park will be a Greek system of elementary education for all; and as the children grow, they can be sorted out into groups and taught what they are best fitted to learn. So we should be spared the rivalry of parallel schools, attempting the same work for different classes; we should be spared the waste of clever children undeveloped, and of incapable children ground in the mill, the misfits that are seen in all schools to-day. And the existing schools, with their tiny playgrounds, or rather yards, of gravel and asphalt, and their dirty and cramped classrooms, might be swept away, or kept as a warning to posterity.

It is not likely that any Government under a party system will take up a dream like this, and try to bring it to pass. They can only reflect the feelings of those who elect them; and those who elect them have been so brought up that they cannot see what is good, or if they could see it, they could not keep their

temper long enough to carry it out. For a beginning we need a rich man, who will give what is necessary to pay for it, so far as to demonstrate what can be done. He would be certain of immortality. Hospitals and asylums alleviate the symptoms of disease; education eradicates the disease itself.

W. H. D. ROUSE.





# THE PERSE PLAYERS

(March, 1913.)

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K. B. WILLIAMSON, Esq.		





## PLAYWRIGHTS OR PLAYWRITERS?

‘What do you read, my lord?’

‘Words, words, words.’

*Hamlet.*

When all is said, nothing but real experience can enable us to read a meaning into words. The primary aim then of any educational curriculum which is to include books must be to enable the learner to amass a body of experience by which he may interpret and appreciate the recorded views and experiences of others.

From the first statement of ἀνάμνησις down to your last realization of the wickedness of setting impositions, the main principle of educational theory has been agreed upon, and most tersely expressed in the word education itself. The object of education is to bring out latent ability and to exercise inborn talent by natural means and in the direction most likely to ensure the fullest development of capacity both bodily and mental, so that no inherent power is suffered either to atrophy through neglect or to be turned to evil uses by misapplication. The aim of all education, in short, is the perfection of ability.

Thousands of teachers—all in fact who have thought about it—subscribe to this principle in theory, but they fight hourly against its observance by the eternal bell, book and classroom of their dull and spiritless practice. In consequence, the most urgent need of modern education is a reform of method. Pottering and patching will not do. Let us be hearty about it. You must take away those desks. There are several things I know of besides cricket and football which a boy can learn in action, so whenever you feel the temptation coming over you to fall

back upon tinned experience in the form of books, you should ask yourself if there is not perhaps a healthier diet for the very young. I like to think of natural human feelings breaking into the midst of discussion with a "Let's up and do something!"

We all realize necessities, but we are tardy in practice, and grow old too quickly. All people, but boys especially, need games; not only games of ball, but actual handling of the concrete things ever ready to hand. A boy wants—and it is no rhetoric to say his soul cries out for it—to know the feel of rough boards and the stickiness of clay, he loves the cheery splash of water and the convincing success of driving home a nail. He craves his birthright in the give and take of material things; and he longs to try the wings of his fancy in wonderful flights and dreams. But with every generation comes the same old opposition over again. His elders, whose muscles are stiffening so, that they can sit still for ten minutes without a twitch, will not have him leap with supple joints; their nerves will not stand his drums and trumpets now that their own fanfare has ceased to echo. Slums and the tax-collector have banished for them the gleaming castle and the largess of princes. The lad, they say, must be more staid and learn his responsibilities. It is an unfortunate word: we all have much to answer for.

It seems to me that we need a new centre about which to group educational effort, and for the book as the leading motive I would substitute the school itself, and for reading and writing, which is the traffic of books—play. I should endeavour to make the School supply so full an experience by means of play that, when the world with its work came along in its turn, there would be no shock, but the dawn of a great realization, provoking the ecstatic outcry, "My soul, what a fine big field!"

Montaigne says: "It is not the mind we are training; it is not the body; it is the man, and we must not divide him into two parts." The present-day school makes ridiculously inadequate provision for either: in school, the mind — desk-bound

slaves, book-crammed; out of school, the body—an uninspired ball-beating. But in such a school as we might have it would be almost impossible for boy or master to say at any given moment whether the body or the mind was obtaining more benefit from the game than going on. Ask General Baden-Powell, Dr. Montessori or Prof. Jacques Dalcroze whether they are training the mind or the body, and what kind of back-rest they recommend for a desk, and retire bruised with the answer.

But I have no volume to wander in, and must be brief. These Schools, then, require: for situation, a park (the land is there) on the outskirts of their towns, so that on the one hand they may have the open country, and on the other the homes of their children; for Organization, a system of self-government on Junior Republic lines (which is already in being in England) only specially adapted to the needs of a secondary school rather than a penal colony; for Teachers, men and women who know their subjects thoroughly as well in practice as in theory, yet realize that the School is greater than their subject and that the child is the greatest 'subject' of all; for Curriculum, almost any activity that a healthy appetite demands, *e.g.*

Administration of School affairs as House Captain, Prefect, Editor, Librarian, Scoutmaster; not in pretence, but as responsible officials.

Arts such as Singing, Dancing, Acting, Painting, Poetry, Designing.

Crafts such as 'Scouting,' Building, Carpentry, Gardening, Decorating, Printing, Book-binding, Making of costumes. Agricultural occupations, including poultry, bee-keeping and dairy.

Outdoor study, as in Surveying, and day-long excursions for Botany, Geology, etc.

Sports, with tests, such as Swimming, Shooting, Boxing, Fencing.

Games as a pure recreation.



And therewith and thereafter the co-ordination—which is to say the bringing into line—of these efforts and experiments in courses of History, Geography, Nature Study, Literature, and a very careful drill and study in Mathematics, Natural Science and Languages.

The breathless reader deserves a time-table proof of possibility which cannot be rendered here. But I would point out in passing that this scheme utilizes not only all the sham leisure now needed as a relaxation from bookwork, but also all the tale of hours now wasted by bad method. And so to resume—for Method, playing the game for all it is worth and discovering or inventing the rules as you go, always insisting that the learner has some immediate tangible object in view to work towards; for Discipline, firstly a mutual trust and understanding, and where that fails, an honest inquiry into the cause resulting either in a modification of special method; or at the worst a temporary restriction of what the boy would most value—his freedom of action and initiative. Finally, for the possibility of realization these Schools require the co-operation of the forces at present at work, and they are very many, with intent to win over by gradual encroachment—which is to say by hook—the rights and facilities from those who are now mis-using them or putting them to half-hearted use.

Each of the above statements requires a book to itself, yet I must bed them together in a paragraph. But the hope of achieving the Play School is most surely moving a thousand lives, and I beg to appeal for co-operation. Consider what it means for your schools. All your worries of a curriculum the more inefficient the more you add to it, of the backward child, of the vicious adolescent, of the problem of punishment, of the refractory parent, of the overworked teacher, nay even (if you will go all the way) of overcrowded cities, of an over-lenient because ignorant electorate, here find their ease and solution. Is it, then, a panacea we are proposing? Yes, for a truly

conceived and rightly conducted liberal education is a remedy for all the ills of this kind that flesh inherits. You have made your schoolboy swallow too much and he wants exercise.

A visitor to the Play School would not find many of the usual classes going on, since quite half of them are unnecessary. Boys and girls of all ages would be found at their various occupations singly or in small groups, captained or not as the concern might require. A treasurer sits in his counting-house counting out his money; a small but very important civic functionary goes on his daily round to fill in the official registers. He visits numerous little buildings throbbing with activity, and encounters in turn the swish of the carpenter's plane, the irregular clatter of the weaver's loom, and the cheery clank of pails in the sunny dairy. He finds one master in his form reading-room indicating in one hour the answers to the body of urgent questions which his class has collected for him on that stretch of the subject; another giving a general superintendence to half a dozen classes working by themselves under his guidance; and a third bringing himself up to date in the latest discoveries of his pet squad of gardeners, or assisting at the investigation of some problem in poultry. A housekeeper directs the preparation of meals and the other household duties of the day. Here a senior boy or girl gives instruction in first-aid; here another adds to the fun at the sailing pond by introducing laws of navigation, or gets himself detected of sharp business practice at the weekly market. In the home field the visitor might see the suspension of hedging and draining operations during a Mayday revel with its inspiriting folk-songs and dances, or at a later season join the swimmers during the dinner interval of a harvest noon. Apart from certain specified hours of indoor and outdoor leisure, the time of every member of the Play School Republic would be under the control of the executive body elected from among the citizens. Once a week, perhaps, the visitor might find the citizens applying to their authorities

for the good report which gains them admission to the wonderful entertainment to which each in his turn must contribute. There he might see and hear examples, not only of all the best forms of instrumentation, together with song, dance and recitation, but displays of a virtuosity so foreign to his present content of belief that he must needs at first condemn them as unnatural.

In a building set apart the visitor would find a perpetual though everchanging exhibit of handicrafts; carving, pottery, textile fabrics, metal-work; and designs for use in any medium. In the evening he might hear the legislative body at their enactments, or attend the judiciary, or steal into the midst of that quiet assembly where one stands up before the rest to propose some new plan of his devising, whether it be the first voicing of a new campaign, or a daylight saving bill, or a revised system of voting. And finally, before evening chapel and bedtime he might step apart into the long, dim hall where white Athena, and Hermes, and Aphrodite kept watch and ward, where coloured Venice and old France live again upon the walls, and where perchance some gentle young woman sits in the firelight telling a folk tale of High Germany to three tiny boys and the Headmaster.

It is indeed hard to say who is on the staff, for no one really is not. A garden town must soon cluster about your Play School centre—first outhouses, then workshops, then dwelling places—for the school at its best is home, and home at its best is a school. And many will come from the heart of the great cities to live with you, and to mingle their lives with those of the children and the grown folk who are with you, for who indeed shall dare to say that at any point we may cease to learn and begin to teach? Then the Play School centre will, probably, have to set its face against individual shop-keeping ventures by supporting its own market and store. And that is more relevant than it seems.



In default of so much that might be called real life we may, for the soul's health of our boys and girls, resort to excursions, scouting, practical work in the laboratory, teaching by action in the class-room, and the preparation and performance of stage plays. What immediately follows concerns playmaking under present limitations.

It is a fatal error to buy a ready-made play, have it learnt by heart, and acted without ceremony in hired costume. Your play should be in hand for at least a term, and it will do nothing but good to keep it building throughout the school year. The workers should be a single form whom you can have collectively under your control without tiresome arrangement. The historical period in which the play is set is of importance in a hundred ways, and may either be determined by the courses of History, Geography, and Literature going on; or, if it is done on a large enough scale the play circle might include such study of those subjects as it required. It is advisable to allow the subject and the style of the drama to spring naturally from some immediate demand, small though it be, so long as it becomes general. An interest in castles and heraldry for example may always be counted upon, and this might grow into a drama of mediaeval times. The spontaneous division of a form into Cavaliers and Roundheads will always yield a sturdy play. Our own concern with the Northern Gods originated mainly in the curiosity of a single boy whose father could read the Edda. When the group has such an interest in common a tale is easily found or invented. The most meagre story will do. Look to the characters and they will take care of the plot. Now elect or select the cast and let each person of the drama realize who and of what kind he is. Characters in playmaking begin as types, puppets, and, if the thing has life, grow individualized in the course of time. The crude villain taking on the shaping of himself becomes an Iago or a Loki; the knavish sprite given freedom ripens into Puck or Peter Pan, and the type of young lovers will, with varied

treatment, fill all the degrees between Romeo and Juliet and Freyr and Gerda.

When the story has been assimilated in every piece and part it may be acted through roughly with the aid of notes for dialogue, in prose or verse as proves easier. But though rugged verse is easy, they are few who have the requisite command of prose for such a service. Discussion and digression will form the most useful part of these readings,\* for each player has an end to keep up; has not only something he must say and do, but demands special facilities for his 'characteristic' way of saying and doing it. And all these ends have to be brought into harmony, so that the main conflict or event of the play stands out prominent. If the individuals were left to fight it out, so complete is their impersonation that they would take the time of actual occurrence to achieve a settlement. But they must be reminded that this is not a real conflict but a play with the thread of plot settled, each part having an allotted value in the action. Now each player undertakes to write out his part, often as one of a group of collaborators; or one writer hands in a scene in outline which the persons concerned may enlarge.

While the actual composition of the play is thus in progress there is a great opportunity — amounting to a necessity — of drawing in to this centre a number of related arts and crafts. Carpentry, metal-work, spinning, weaving, dyeing, designing and making costumes, printing and book-binding may each occupy a group of boys or girls. And if the play is to be performed in public, a further number of workers will be drawn in as secretaries, treasurers, stewards, clerks, messengers and stage-hands.

But it is unwise to be too sanguine of what may be done within the present narrow bounds of school activity, and with the present bookish generation, lest we grow secure and

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\* See Introduction to Perse Playbooks: No. 1.



disinclined to demand further facilities. Let me say at once that, though the aim in founding the Perse Players was to make the beginnings of some of these industries, we have so far failed to carry out the principle to any great extent. Alas, it is obviously still quite absurd to expect your schoolboy to cut and stitch for himself the simplest tunic. But would it be credible if experience had not proved it true that hardly a boy of eighteen can be relied upon to carry through alone such a simple business as the hire of chairs, or that almost any of the juniors rather than shape his own wooden targe and dagger will be content to hide his unfitness behind the handiwork of one of his father's craftsmen? I have been told that these things do not matter. But our public schoolboys know all about the *Κερκίδες* of the Greek theatre and have studied in pictures the weapons of the mirmillo and the retiarius. Moreover they write essays on subjects that they know nothing about, and 'learn Shakespeare' at a desk. They win silver cups on their sports' day, and are encouraged to revere the memory of Trafalgar. We push them from book to book and dare never leave them alone for fear they do nothing. Individual teachers can do little to remedy the state of affairs that all this betokens, and assuredly the boys are not to blame. The system is faulty at heart. As a substitute we might try the Play School.

I must deal briefly with the authorship of the plays and poems in this book. *Baldr's Death* came first in order of time. It began as classwork with Form IIIB on the wave of enthusiasm which followed the production of *Thor's Hammer*. The story, cast, plot and sets were fully discussed and mainly determined, and several speeches had been written when last term came to an end [Christmas 1912.] This term's promotion distributed the cast among three forms so that full collaboration became impossible. Then we resorted to a method which, though perfectly admissible when openly confessed, introduces great complication into the question of authorship. One boy took over all the

available plans and material and proceeded to work the play into its present form, adopting, revising or discarding the speeches we had, but composing by far the greater part himself. He worked sometimes by himself at home, but quite often under my supervision at tea-time in my room. It is clear then that the whole play might have been composed at my direction; and so in a sense it was, only my chief aim was always to stimulate original production, and my chief share throughout has been in rejecting passages or disapproving of suggestions that were quite evidently unsuitable. The play has in fact been watched, encouraged, aided and somewhat trimmed in its growth, so that when the question arises, 'Who wrote the plays?' you may certainly write me among the number; but chiefly, I beg, as a contributor by criticism. In the appendix will be found a list of the passages which must be ascribed (i) to other individuals of the class (ii) to a tea-party collaboration of boys (iii) to the source of a too direct suggestion from myself. Only one poor line is recognised by the boys as my sole product, and that is 'Summer and Song together on the hills.'

There are one or two grave weaknesses in the plot, *e.g.* where Frigg, after telling Loki that she has disregarded the mistletoe at the gate, immediately expresses great anxiety for Baldr's welfare. But such flaws are to be laid to the charge of the Old Norse Myth which we have taken over entire. The story itself too is bare of dramatic incident, and it is hard to see how the boys could have avoided this difficulty without spoiling the tragic unity of the action. However, the work is fine poetry, and has some very dramatic passages; in my opinion the third scene of Act I. alone justifies the preservation of the whole play.

Perhaps the failings which will be most marked are, the sameness in the utterance of Baldr and Hodr respectively, and the monotone of woe in which the whole is sung. But one does not look for Shakespeare's variety of passionate expression in

a boy of twelve years and eight months, and there is a power of appeal in reiteration. Yesterday while lending a hand with the Epilogue to the plays—the idea of which came out of the Prologue, the moral reflections from the junior official, and most of the phrasing from me—I remarked the absence of heartiness and cheer in the work, and received a reply characteristic of the chief author of *Baldr's Death*, "My job's woe." We all felt this in the play, and decided that the temporary lift of the tragedy (in Act II. Scene 2) caused by the announcement of Frigg's good news, should culminate in a fine *crisis*. So the latter part of that scene, beginning with Thor's 'Good news you bring' (known to us as the 'Rag Scene') was interpolated in the following manner.

The full cast returned willingly to school on a special half-holiday, and we had the great hall to ourselves with no one to consider for noise. A rude stage was set and the players called upon for suggestions. At first they acted their views of the fittest celebration, while I endeavoured to keep pace in record. After going once through it the players gathered round to dictate their 'speeches' and stage directions, and such a struggling babel ensued that a chance caller went away without guessing that anyone was core to that heap, and two players contrived to settle a difference of opinion by trial of single combat without being detected as non-participants in the playmaking.

The clash of weapons! Do the Aesir fight  
Among themselves about some petty quarrel?  
Nay, be not frightened for thy mighty sons,  
They do not fight. They only shout in play.

The first draft of *Freyr's Wooing* was completed by its author without any help at all. The plot was adequate and the characters full of opportunity; but a decided poverty of action as expressed in the lean speeches made an entire revision



essential. So a group of three or four playwrights came to a series of tea-parties over it and succeeded in giving substance to the work. But it is still a play which cannot be appreciated until seen, for its chief virtue lies in the scope it gives for business and for those little touches of expression that are needed, more especially in a comedy, to bring out character.

This play gives noteworthy indications of the extent to which Shakespeare may be appreciated by a boy of twelve and a half. Skirnir (who is the chief author), going to woo his master's bride, encounters as the lady one of his age-mates of the Fourth Form, and though he conducts the affair not quite in the manner of Cesario, yet I venture to suggest that he can feel his Shakespeare in a manner lost to all boys since the days of that 'aery of children' of which Hamlet speaks. These boys have, of course, not read Hamlet, yet Niord as acted is a kind of boy's Polonius. Again, Freyr and Gerda, when they meet in Iduna's Grove (aided no more on our stage by *scenery* than Shakespeare's lovers were on his), avowedly model themselves on Lorenzo and Jessica. In the appendix will be found a more detailed assignment of the authorship of this play also.

It is difficult to speak of anything but the genesis of *The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies*, for when we were well within a month of performance I had seen in writing nothing but the first draft of one scene. And even now the play has never been read through to me from start to finish. The theme arose out of the keen interest felt by several members of the Sixth for the English folk-songs and dances which have a footing in the school, and which three of their number have studied with Mr. Sharp at Stratford-on-Avon. The ballad, a good version of which is included in "English Folk-Songs for Schools," was first dictated and then discussed in school again and again by the ten boys who formed this English class. The fact that only half of them have any real knowledge of

the songs and dances has prevented their play from having the 'folk' appeal which so many of Mr. Sharp's other pupils will expect.

The discussion rambled on through several periods, and, though the details of plot remained vague, characters were soon developed. Oswald came out first, I believe—his name is that of Goneril's steward—and soon after the man Gypsy, and then the Green Man (author of the new words to the song), whose queer name arises from his being 'the sort of forester fellow who wears a green coat.' Would that all dresses and fittings were as appropriately determined from the outset. Peter is the name of a player, but we never troubled to invent him another for his part. It is he who says, 'I can't talk dialect in the purple.'

Quite early in the term we tried rehearsing with half-made speeches in the form of notes, as originally tried with Form IIIb, but the players soon pointed out that the method was ill adapted to the adult self-consciousness. After that, various individuals undertook to write a scene, and several praiseworthy attempts have had to be rejected. The play as it stands in words is the work of one writer in particular, but he acknowledges great obligations and declines to accept the credit or responsibility of main authorship.

As long a time as possible should always be allowed for the composition of a play by any variety of this co-operative principle. The work must grow. So long as the theme has been hammered and shaped by preliminary discussion and subsequent rehearsal it may be counted wrought and not written, and it does not matter which of the players writes it up except that one or another will excel in power of expression. It would be absurd to insist that each player should literally compose his own part. The play will gain enormously by being kept in a molten state and shaped by the players at their rehearsals; and even after it has reached its final form, as much, of course, depends upon the acting as upon the written word.

The accomplishment of this undertaking to produce three such plays upon a school stage has only been made possible by the kindness of the boys' parents in making the dresses required, and more especially by the generosity of some friends who not only designed and made many of the costumes for *Baldr's Death*, but have placed at our disposal the results of their home experiments with vegetable dyes. The music for the songs, with quartet accompaniment, has been specially composed by a member of the staff.

In order that other schools less fortunately aided may not be deterred from producing plays owing to the difficulty and labour involved in the dressing, we illustrate in the Induction to "The Wraggle Taggle Gypsies" a scheme which should be applied not only on the stage at a public performance, but at all times, in school and out, when there is a play toward. Stated as shortly as possible it is this: Have a collection of very simple tunics all of a pattern but of several sizes, and made of some stout material that will stand the traffic of the stage. Let them be of two kinds, one for male and the other for female characters. Dye them yourself according to some conventional scheme of your own, so that whenever your players come to play, the King dons, say, the purple, the Queen yellow, Hamlet black, Ophelia white, Laertes red, Polonius blue, Horatio green, the Grave-diggers brown and grey, and so on; and there is your play dressed. No ornament should be added lest piecemeal your difficulties creep in again.

The stimulating appeal which precedes these plays with high ceremony upon the stage is the work of our official Prologue, a member of the Sixth Form. No one may say that his 'job is woe,' for it rests with him to voice the ideals we are all striving to attain, and I cannot but feel that the exhortation might with advantage be heard beyond the limits of our hall—

Ours not to read, but do,  
Not only dream, but make our dreams come true.



For general observations on the composition of poems by the juniors, the reader must be referred to an essay in Playbook No. 2. There are, however, several interesting particulars connected with the origin of the poems here printed, which are for the most part the work of our youngest playboys.\* There is a kind of co-operation possible even in the composition of a lyric, not alone by means of the oral discussion of a theme, but also by one poet taking up the central idea of another (as shown here in the 'Bell' series), or by the adoption of a single line which has struck home as in the Ship (ii). All these poems are recent, and may reasonably look forward to a long line of descendants.

Nearly every one of the poems by the playboys has developed its own method of recital, sometimes originated by the composer, sometimes by his fellows, and sometimes by myself. In reciting poetry we at first used Morris sticks every now and then to mark the beats. Now sticks have become as essential to the poetry lessons as the weapons of the sword-dance are to the class plays. But it is no longer beats we denote but rhythms, by a swinging motion of the body, a waving of the free hand, a rise and fall of the stick or a spreading wide of the arms. Quite lately this expressive movement has developed into action and voice inflection combined, to indicate or intensify the meaning of the words. Imagine us playing with the invisible Ariel†.

*Ariel.* Come unto these yellow sands,  
                   And then take hands :  
 Curtsied when you have, and kiss'd  
                   The wild waves whist :  
 Foot it featly here and there ;  
                   And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear.

---

\* The figures at the foot of each poem give Form and age.

† This version has the authority of the First Folio.

*Burthen dispersedly :*

Hark, hark !

Bow, wow !

The watch-dogs bark :

Bow, wow !

*Ariel :* Hark, hark ! I hear

The strain of strutting Chanticleer.

*Cry :* Cock-a-diddle-dow.

In this method we have the beginnings of a correlation between recitation, voice - production, verse - composition, folk-dancing, acting, playmaking, and 'eurhythmics.' It will be interesting to see what comes of it. Without any of us using a book, all the boys of the three lowest Forms can learn from one's recitation a poem of three stanzas, after two or at most four repetitions.

The origin of *The Solitary Hedgehog* will bear relation. It was one of those rare occasions when a class settles down to write verse in schooltime, and Form IIB sedulously applied itself to the making of autumn poems. Presently a head was lifted and one inquired after the spelling of the word 'solitary.' Another was induced to write it correctly on the blackboard. Followed a pause, and then a question from a third as to the meaning of that word written up. 'All alone' was added by another hand. When the poems came to be read, lo, there was the writing on the wall figuring as the refrain to a song of hibernation.

Solitary, all alone,

Sleeps the little Hedgehog.

After looking carefully through this little selection of poems, I find myself able to say that there has been no revision nor any correction from me save in three slight instances. The last line of the stanzas in *The Solitary Hedgehog* always began with 'Twas,' and I suggested that more telling words be substituted.



And in the last line of *My Porringer*, on the writer's despair, after many vain attempts at finding an appropriate adjective, it was left for me to supply the futile epithet 'chubby.' Again in the last line of *The Fall of the Leaf* I have substituted 'frost' for 'scythe.' Once on being consulted for a subject I suggested 'Indoors.' This raised no picture, nor started any song in the mind of the inquirer, so I added "When you go into your house, what do you see?" The reply, as handed in the following morning, proved instructive.

We send out our third little book to the world of schools. You are accustomed to books, and to deeds in abstract only, but perhaps as you read what we have written some echo will reach you of what we are doing also. In fancy you may be able to see Bragi playing floor games with Tyr and Hodr, or hear the knee-bells ringing when the Lord of the Castle and the Woman Gypsy dance a Morris jig with the Prologue; or you may dream of jousting with a tiny knight who is at once a poet and a shield bearer. Much of our life is expressed in our words and more lies there concealed, but it is in a simple cipher that any who has youth may read.

Think you that they who made those gods of old  
Made them of books?

H. CALDWELL COOK.



## PROLOGUE

*The Beadles draw the curtains apart, and Prologue advances.*

*Prologue.* Fair greeting, friends, and may you find to-night,  
 Here in our hall, an hour or so's delight.  
 But first be warned, that such of you as looks  
 Upon the world and man only through books,  
 And not himself; such as will never turn  
 His hand to toil by which to live and learn  
 As others do: be far from hence: he'll find  
 In what we bring, but little to his mind  
 Or understanding: ours not to read but do,  
 Not only dream, but make our dreams come true  
 In act and earnest all our days. And when  
 Our hands, so long withheld, are given again  
 Their freedom: when the spade and oar we ply,  
 Or wield the hammer, when we steep the dye,  
 And practise every craft that men pursued  
 While their hands kept their cunning: then renewed  
 Indeed, as in some fresh heroic age,  
 We'll act our gods with all the world for stage—  
 True Players, who all day long and every day,  
 Making the years one never-closing play,  
 Enact our "Dream of human life." For know,  
 The songs we sing, the gods that here we show  
 To-night—brave gods unsoured by mortal strife,  
 Seen fresh and bold in the clear dawn of life—  
 Spring not from print and paper, but present  
 Our living work, our tears, our merriment,

Our new-sprung life, and thence their being hold.  
 Think you that they who made those gods of old  
 Made them of books? Nay, sterner stuff were they  
 Than such, with scanty time to while away  
 In dreams. Men of their hands, unused to ease,  
 They plowed the hard-bound earth and on the seas  
 Fought cold and shipwreck; sought their daily food  
 From perilous sea or wild unfriendly wood;  
 Pierced with high winds that swept by night and day  
 Their frozen earth, and stung by bitter spray  
 On shore and shipboard: till their hard-won years  
 Of labour, where scant dreaming-time appears,  
 Brought forth the gods, that those unsmiling skies  
 Grew bright and wonderful to men's new eyes,  
 That barren world divine.

And if to-day

That morning light seem spent or driven away  
 From earth; or if our stage seem small and bare  
 For the brave gods of old to figure there;  
 Yet never doubt, in all their ancient might  
 And ageless forms, the gods are here to-night;  
 For though their heaven may seem disturbed and bound,  
 And straitened by this hurrying, changeless round,  
 Though vanished seem that beauty that once gave  
 Men's toils a glory to outlive the grave:  
 Yet while there's youth to see the earth and skies  
 With hopes undimmed and no book-wearied eyes,  
 To take delight in toil, still to feel strong,  
 To love brave deeds and do them, for so long  
 The gods are safe: but when his heart no more  
 Delights in sword and hammer, spade and oar,  
 When he puts down his tool, hangs up his spear,  
 And tales of toil and hardship lose his ear,  
 The twilight of the gods indeed is here.

Here then we bring three plays: and first present  
The new-wed lady in her castle pent,  
Fettered with silks and gold; who thought to find  
Freedom without, and left her lord behind  
And all her treasure, for the open air  
And boundless earth, that she might wander there  
Lost to the world she knew: but only found  
Her would-be flight left her the faster bound.  
Then up to Asgard is your fancy led;  
You'll see the gods and how false Loki sped  
The little shaft of scorned mistletoe,  
That struck the god of light, and laid him low,  
And darkened all the world. And last, away  
From these sad themes, to lighter love and play!  
To see how Freyr's bride is wooed and won,  
And mirth in plenty. And when our plays are done,  
Judge them not ancient tales of others' strife  
Or mirth retold, but our own thoughts of life  
Embodied here: and if some fault you find  
Of youth with his own glorious vision blind,  
Be not too harsh, but in the tales we tell  
Seek what we know of truth: and so farewell.





## THE INDUCTION

### TO THE WRAGGLE-TAGGLE GYPSIES

*The front of a plain, curtained stage, with a cloak-rack, on which hang a number of brightly coloured tunics for men and robes for women. Enter the Players in shirts, shorts, and shoes. They are discussing the dressing of their play.*

*1st Player.* Who are you?

*2nd Player.* The Lord of the Castle. I'm going to wear red.

*3rd Player.* I'm the woman gypsy. Where's a robe?

*4th Player.* I say, but look here, what about some hair for me?

*2nd Player.* All right, I know the very thing for you. Come on. *[They go off.]*

*5th Player.* *[To 3rd Player]* Here's yours. I'm wearing this; the green's half my part.

*Enter the BEADLES.*

*1st Beadle.* Have you finished with the rack yet?

*[They begin to carry it off.]*

*6th and 7th Players.* *[Who have been talking apart of some point in the play]* Here, wait a bit! Hold on!

*[They make a rush and snatch two tunics from the rack, which the Beadles carry out.]*

*6th Player.* Here, give me that one. I can't talk dialect in the purple.

*7th Player.* Well, I don't want a purple one either. I'll—  
*[He runs after the Beadles.]*

*5th Player.* *[Who has been discussing the arrangement of a shawl with 3rd Player]* Put it over like that, and you'll soon get over the difficulty.

*3rd Player.* Yes, but I can't hold it like that all the time; and if it falls off, they'll laugh.

*5th Player.* Let them laugh.

*1st Player.* [*Putting in his head*] Haven't you finished yet? We're coming. [*They go out and the back curtain is drawn.*]



THE  
WRAGGLE-TAGGLE GYPSIES

*A Dramatization of the Ballad*

BY

MEMBERS OF THE SIXTH FORM



# THE WRAGGLE-TAGGLE GYPSIES.

A DRAMATIZATION OF THE BALLAD.

## PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

THE LORD OF THE CASTLE.

THE LADY.

OSWALD, the Steward.

THE GREEN MAN [Robin], a Forester.

GYPSY MAN.

GYPSY WOMAN.

PETER, another Gypsy.

*Elizabeth Seitz*  
*Elena Goldschmidt*  
*Reulah Brant*  
*Ruth McElhiney*  
*Mary Pack*  
*Antonie T.*  
*Sucile Pearson*

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SCENE I.—Sunset. *The Lady's Bower.*

*A jangling of keys heard. OSWALD comes in, ushering the LADY.*

*Lady.* How comes it that my door was locked?

*Oswald.* I thought, my Lady, there being unwonted guests about, 'twould be better to restrict access to your room.

*Lady.* Your zeal outdoes your wisdom, Oswald.

*X [Oswald still lingers round the door.] Thank you: I will not keep you longer from more urgent duties.*

*Oswald.* By your leave, my Lady, I will renew the rushes on the floor. They are somewhat stale, I believe.

*Lady.* There is no need.

*[Sits down.]*

*Oswald.* The tapestry's awry. Beside, my Lord strictly enjoined me to keep your room as fair as might be.

*[The Lady ignores him, and sits thinking with her chin resting on her hand. Oswald fiddles about, anxious to begin a conversation. Hems and haws.]*

*Oswald.* Ahem! They are making merry down in the hall now, my Lady.

*Lady.* Ah!

*Oswald.* His Reverence the Abbot finds my Lord's Malvoisie much to his taste, my Lady.

*Lady.* Ah!

*Oswald.* By chance, my Lady, you have heard the latest rumour about him and the Lady Jane? Only a silly tale of course, my Lady. *[No answer.]* Ahem! by chance, my Lady, you have heard the——*[Clapping heard from below.]* My Lord summons me. I crave your leave to go, my Lady.

*[Bows. No answer; bows again and withdraws.]*

*Lady.* Thank goodness I am rid of that officious fool.

*[Gets up and looks out of the window. Steps heard on the stairs as she sits down again.]*

Dear me, here comes the meddling fellow back again!

*[Enter Oswald.]*

*Oswald.* My Lady! *[No answer.]* Ahem! my Lady!

*Lady.* Well?

*Oswald.* My Lord requests your presence in the hall, my Lady.

*Lady.* Tell him I feel unwell and cannot come.

*Oswald.* But, my Lady——

*Lady.* I am unwell and cannot come. *[Exit Oswald.]*

Will this fellow never cease to plague me? *[A pause. Heavier steps are heard on the stairs, and the LORD enters.]*

*Lord.* What's this? The moody fit again upon you? Come now, be reasonable. My guests crave your presence at the board.

*Lady.* I sent Oswald with the message that I was unwell and could not come.

*Lord.* Unwell! pooh! pooh! Nothing worse ails you than a heaviness that comes of this brooding by yourself. The merry-making in the hall will cheer you. [*He takes her arm.*] Now, come with me.

*Lady.* O no! I haven't the heart to sit in a stifling hall and hear coarse tales and aimless talk, nor breathe wine-tainted air, when I can hear the cool evening wind stirring the poplars at the gate. [*She gets up and goes to the window.*] How can you take delight in such low, sordid things when the sun behind the pines is weltering in such a gorgeous sea of colour?

*Lord.* [*Staring*] Good Heavens! what ails you? One might take you for a natural. I think there really must be something in what they say about the moon influencing men's minds. It is at the full to-night. And you are unusually—er—well, strange.

[*She does not answer but stands gazing out of the window.*]

*Lord.* [*Becoming indignant*] Look here, I've had about enough of this. It isn't fair towards me. It is as much as to reproach me with being an unkind husband, and we not wedded three full months.

*Lady.* No, no, don't say that.

*Lord.* But I do say it. I promised to make you a happy wife, and I have done my best to keep my word. You have a fair castle—a better is not built in the country-side—fine rooms, hung with rare tapestry that generations of my forefathers have treasured as a priceless heirloom—secluded bowers where you can sit over your embroidery, a dappled pony, and besides, a husband's love and service. What else can I give to you to make you happy?

*Lady.* No, it is not that. You cannot give me anything.

*Lord.* Then, what is the matter?

*Lady.* O, I am tired of being shut up here, of working gaudy trifles within four grey walls.

*Lord.* But you have already, since our wedding, made four visits to our neighbours; let me see, to Sir Harry's, to Sir——



*Lady.* It's not that I mean.

*Lord.* [*Getting angry*] Then what *do* you mean?

*Lady.* What's the use of telling you? I've told you twenty times before. I want to breathe the open-air and live; I want to run wild upon the moors, and walk barefoot in the dew; to watch the skylark drop, and track him to his nest; see the great herons sail to the lowlands; follow tinkling brooks to where they bubble forth, cool and clear among the rocks; dance through the dark, sweet-smelling pinewoods; trample down underfoot the breast-high bracken, and get lost in fairy-haunted glens; and then give way to happy weariness in the wanton heather under the twinkling stars, and rise again with the sun to——

*Lord.* Why, this is madness.

*Lady.* Oh, I am sick of working embroidery in a bower; of banquetting in unwholesome halls; of all the dull futility of this.

[*Spreading out her hands.*]

*Lord.* [*Shouting and stamping his foot*] Oh I have no patience with you . . . Stay and sulk then! [*Ramps out.*]

*Lady.* [*Calling after him*] Some day, when the feeling comes strong upon me, you will find my finery upon the floor, and me gone, yes gone! [*Stays looking out of window*] He means well; there isn't a better husband in the land. And yet he does not understand me, and he never will. The thought is appalling. A year of this I verily believe will grey my hair, and leave my eyes as soulless and unseeing as those of a prisoner immured for years in a dark cell underground. What a shattered dream my wedding is! When my duty was to sit on a cushion and sew a fine seam, and learn to be a well-bred lady; when I saw Edward and Hal go out a-hawking and heard them tell of their exploits in the woods and on the moors, I would comfort myself with the thought of wedding some kindred spirit who should understand me. Then what dreams of happiness! But it was fairy gold, a glamour misty and unstable, and 'tis gone, gone. And I have not words or thoughts to tell my feeling—that yearning—

[*Her voice sinks to a murmur as she looks far away out of the window*—the sun's gone—the dark pines in the afterglow—a mystic fairyland behind them—beads, embroidery and bower—wind in the poplars—stars in still pools. [*Gipsy song floats in. She starts up, and stands listening as if spell-bound.*]

A mist came out of the lake to-night,  
 When the woods were still and the winds were low,  
 It hid my true love out of my sight,  
 And its breath was cold as the winter snow.

I found my love in the morning light,  
 When the woods were still and the winds were low,  
 But her eyes were shut and her face was white,  
 And her breast was cold as the winter snow.

So now I pass where the day is bright—  
 But the woods are still and the winds are low,  
 And I sing no longer by day or night,  
 For my heart is cold as the winter snow.

[*Song stops. She slips off her shoes, rings, etc., and steals out as the curtain falls. The curtain opens a moment later and the Lord's step is heard on the stairs.*]

*Lord.* I fear I was harsh to you. I did not mean it; so come down to please me. I shall not be happy without—  
 Halloa! Not here! Where can she be? Oswald, ho Oswald!  
 Oswald, I say!

*Enter OSWALD.*

*Oswald.* Here, my Lord. What is your will?

*Lord.* Where is my Lady?

*Oswald.* Is she not here, my Lord?

*Lord.* Can't you see, fool?

*Oswald.* If she be not here, my Lord, I know not where she can be.

*Lord* [*To himself*] Can it be—she did not mean—my harshness—[*To Oswald*] Oh, get you gone! But stay. Who was singing outside a while ago?

*Oswald*. Some gypsies, I believe, my Lord, or some such good-for-nothings.

*Lord*. And where are they now?

*Oswald*. They are gone, my Lord.

*Lord*. Yes, fool; but whither?

*Oswald*. They pitch their lodging in the wilds somewhere, my Lord.

*Lord*. Yes, but where? [*Stamps his foot*] Wilds, you nincompoop! Come, tell me! How can I find out?

*Oswald*. Robin, the forester came to-day. He sups among your henchmen now. He should know. Shall I——

*Lord*. Fetch him, man! Come, stir yourself! By heavens, if you don't——[*Exit Oswald precipitately. Looking round room.*] Shoes! rings! great God, it must be true,—my senseless outburst—

GREEN MAN *strides in, followed by Oswald.*

*Green Man*. What is your will, my Lord?

*Lord*. Those gypsies that were singing at the gate; which way will they have gone?

*Green Man*. I cannot say for sure; let me see—

*Lord*. Yes, yes; but which way are they likely to have gone?

*Green Man*. [*Stepping to the window*] The night is clear and still. We may see some signs of them. [*Puts his hand above his eyes and scans the country. Lord looks eagerly over his shoulder*] Yes, look! Smoke beyond Blackscar and slightly to the north! [*Indicates right with his hand*] Don't you see? Among the pines.

*Lord*. Yes, yes, I see. And what's the nearest way?

*Green Man*. Well, the stream that leaps the force below Blackscar bends southward, [*Indicates left*], and, as you know, curves this way again, and passes just behind the castle.



*Lord.* O, yes, I know the way as far as the Boiling Force. But when you get there, what next?

*Green Man.* The way seems then to end among the stones, and the only path winds round to the left and turns almost back again under the Brant; you know the ledge, it's dangerous——

*Lord.* An instant—Oswald! O here you are; get me my horse saddled, the white one, and quickly too.

*Green Man.* But if you keep straight on, you'll come to the track again among the pines, and there you'll find the gypsies, or I'm no forester.

*Lord.* [*Seeing Oswald*] Is my horse ready?

*Oswald.* No, my Lord, I was waiting to ask——

*Lord.* [*Pushing him roughly out of the way*] Life and death, fool; get out of my way! My horse, quick! my horse!

*Curtain.*

## SCENE II.—*The Gypsy Camp.*

*Gypsy Woman.* Hark! What's that? I heard a stone roll down from the rock that overhangs the Boiling Force. Listen! it's clattering down the Brant, and plunk! it goes into the whirlpool.

*Peter.* Pshaw! T' rain 'as loost t' steans and every breath o' wind sends one abeancin' dean amun t' rocks.

*Gypsy Woman.* But there's scarce a breath of wind to-night.

*Peter.* O, they dhroppen o' their own seln. I've yarn a dozen fa' sith sundean ef ave yarn one.

*Gypsy Woman.* There is a power of water coming down to-day. At sunset I went up Blackscar, as they call the rock that overhangs the force, and leant out over the Brant. The black whirlpool at the foot was seething like a cauldron, fringed with white foam. At the outlet, not six foot wide, the black was altogether hidden in white. The spray hit my face. You can even hear the thunder from here, though faintly. I got

dizzy watching the water swirl, and when——What's that? I heard a twig crack.

*Peter.* O, a weasel, nowt bura weasel. But—Halloa! Who're you? [*Enter Lady*] And where are yer shoen? You'll have had a rough passage o'er t' steanes, an' t' grass is none too warm. Coom an' sit thee dean by 't fire.

*Lady.* Thank you.

*Peter.* Mind t'cindhers! Thee'st know it, ef thee threaden on one wi' yer bare feet. [*Gypsy Woman stares resentfully; Gypsy Man glances curiously.*]

*Gypsy Woman.* What do you want, woman?

*Peter.* [*In audible whisper*] Sh! oo's a liddy. Ilk a foo cud a tow'd that.

*Gypsy Woman.* [*Aloud*] You're right, Peter; that is just what a fool would see. But if you weren't a fool you would see that a lady wouldn't be wandering about alone in such a spot, and at such a time, let alone without shoes. A moon-struck wench, the village natural, I should say.

*Peter.* Sh! Woman. Howd thy nise.

*Lady.* [*Embarrassed*] I—I thought gypsies didn't wear shoes.

*Gypsy Woman.* They don't when they can't get them. But what's that to do with you?

*Lady.* I want to come and join you.

*Gypsy Woman.* You want to come and join us! Then that settles it; you are mad.

*Peter.* Howd yer tongue, you jealous owd vixen. Dunnut cast her affliction i' 'er face. Oo connut 'elp it, poor lass.

*Gypsy Woman.* What! I jealous? Jealous of that half-witted hussy! Jealous of that barefoot brazen wench! I'd as soon be jealous of——

*Gipsy Man.* That's enough, woman. [*She subsides.*]

*Peter.* Her tongue wer allus a scorpiunt's nest. Stir it, and a swarm o' stinging things come abuzzin' abeat yer lugs.



*Gypsy Man.* Then don't poke the nest again. [*Peter subsides in turn.*] Are you hungry, lady?

*Lady.* I thank you, but I am not hungry, friend.

*Gypsy Man.* The air nips sharp to-night.

*Lady.* Yes. But better cold and fresh under the open sky than warm and tainted within four grey walls.

*Gypsy Man.* Ah! I never slept between walls but once and they were close enough together.

*Lady.* And when was that?

*Gypsy Man.* When they locked me up for a sturdy beggar. Old Sir John Lucy—they brought me up before him—roared when I denied I was a beggar, “Do you gainsay me, dog? Do you give me the lie, you scurvy villain? Do you think I cannot tell a lousy knave when I see him? Lock him up, jailors! The hangman shall crop his ears, to-morrow.” Then he lurched off to finish his carousing, and drown the other half of his wits in a stoup of Malmsey. They mewed me up in a dark loathsome cell, along with a dozen other wretches, sweaty from the road, and foul from long immurement. I spent the night in the filthy den—ugh! I can taste the thick foul air now. [*Spits.*]

*Lady.* And did they—clip your ears?

[*Gypsy Man shows his ears.*]

*Gypsy Man* [*Musing*] Sir John died a short time afterwards. Some say it was of a surfeit, but they boiled his steward in oil for a poisoner. [*She glances at him as if struck by some disconcerting thought; but he remains unmoved and she turns away satisfied.*] But above all, I remember the horror of being pent up. I, who was wont to dwell in heaths and wildernesses, and to sleep under the bare sky, and to breathe the free air of open spaces, went wellnigh mad to find myself hemmed in by walls. I scarce could withhold myself from dashing against the window-bars like a new-caged bird.

*Lady.* [*Earnestly*] O, then you know what I have felt; the stifling confinement of the hard grey walls that crush the soul. And you know that deep inner yearning which no words can tell; the longing for the air, the pining for life in the wildernesses, where the fresh winds blow unfettered by walls, and the deep star-set blue is the sleeper's only roof; and you understand why, when I heard your gypsy song at sunset beneath my window, I slipped off my golden rings, and doffed my shoes, and stole out to follow in your wake along the white moor-road. You will let me come with you from wood to wood, through moor and dale, and share your fare, and smell the sweet wood-smoke when the sun's gone down.

*Peter.* Haw, haw, swaet wood-smoak? Haw, haw! Lucky we've pitched aar lodgin' i't woodland. On t' bare moor, where there's scarce a copse for miles, yer a-brunnin' o' dried horse-muck and cattle-dung. Bruns weel and a', howsome it do gie a flavour to t' broth, o' times; un t' smoak 's none to swate.

*Gypsy Woman.* There'll soon be no fire at all; there's scarce but ashes left. You men will sit there lazing at your ease, and watch the flames sink down to cinders, the red ashes turn white, ere you will stir hand or foot to gather fuel.

[*She gets up to go with the air of a martyr.*]

*Lady.* O, let me go! I will gather fuel and mend the fire.

*Gypsy Woman.* Sit you down. A weakling wench like you couldn't find the wood we want, nor bring it in.

*Lady.* O yes I could; just let me try.

*Peter.* Yer connut go barefoot, lass. Tak 'er shoen.

*Gypsy Woman.* That she won't!

*Gypsy Man.* Give her your shoes, woman.

[*Gypsy Woman obeys. Lady goes off.*]

*Peter.* Poor mad wench. Looks a liddy an' a'. You nyedn't cast her affliction i' 'er face, woman.

*Gypsy Man.* She's not mad; no madder than you—which is saying little—no madder than I.

*Peter.* So, ho! I jist thought as 'ow oo tuk yer fancy; a baint ne'er yeard ye loose yer gab sae free to a sthranger afore.

*Gypsy Man.* She is not mad, I say. I own I thought her mad at first; and meant to draw her with idle talk about the weather. But then she broached a subject that draws me like toasted cheese a rat. I forgot I was talking to a stranger wench, a natural; saw only the walls around me; tasted the foul fettered air. And now I know she is not mad; at least, if I'm not. It was merely a pining for the free cool air and the open spaces, that made her steal from her Lord's castle at the beck of our song.

*Peter.* Her laird'll coom acrapin' afther 'er afoor long a'm athinkin'. An' t'ud be wie a reet gud lither thong as a'd fot ma lass back ef oo'd a geet it i'er yarb fer't flit.

*Gypsy Woman.* Talk, man, idle talk. But—hark! Three times I thought I heard a stone roll down the Brant, and flounder in the force, in the black whirlpool at the foot——there goes another!

*Peter.* Thee'rt reet, lass. A've yarn t' plunk as plain as a yar yo spake.

*Gypsy Woman.* Come across here. Through the gap in the trees you can see far along the track. [*Peter and Gypsy Woman step to the back of the stage*] Look! A horseman riding across Blackscar, across the rock that overhangs the force! You can see the trappings glint in the moonlight.

*Peter.* Oo's acumin' 'ere sthrait! Oo smells t' smoak o' ar fire.

*Gypsy Woman.* Let's back, that he may find us innocent round the fire. [*They go back to the fire. Pause; both listen intently.*]

*Peter.* T' horse has stopped. Theer! Con't yar t'breshwood athrakin'?

*Gypsy Woman.* He is tying his horse to a tree. The brambles are too thick to bring a horse through. [*Enter Lord. He looks round, wondering whom to address.*]



*Peter.* Gud neet to thee, measther. Es ther owt as a cun do fer thee? [*Lord ignores him and addresses Gypsy Man.*]

*Lord.* Have you seen a woman pass this way? A barefoot woman? [*Peter whispers to Gypsy Woman.*]

*Lord.* Eh? What's that you say?

*Peter.* A said as ow t' wer a sthrange place an' a sthrange time o't neet. fer't be aseechin' o'a barefoot 'ooman.

[*Lord turns from Peter to Gypsy Man.*]

*Lord.* [*Angrily*] I ask you, have you seen a barefoot woman pass this way?

*Gypsy Man.* And I answer as my worthy neighbour there.

*Lord.* The devil take you! Why can't you give a plain answer? You shuffling gypsy liars can never look a man in the face and answer straightly "Yes" or "No."

*Gypsy Man.* Then I'll not try.

*Lord.* Come, come, man. Do not make me mad. Can't you see that I am moved and short of temper? Come, answer plainly. [*Peter whispers to Gypsy Woman. Lord turns suddenly round on them.*]

*Lord.* Eh? What's that?

*Peter.* Ef a mon connut stir t' fire as e's lit bur e mun be murdtherd o' looks et's none sae weel wie 'im.

*Lord.* Come, come, man, answer. Did a woman, a barefoot woman, follow you from the house down yonder, where you sang beneath the window?

*Gypsy Man.* A barefoot woman? I've seen no barefoot women. Barefoot women are not wont to walk about alone in such a place and at such a time;—Ah! I have it! A natural, a poor half-witted wench.

*Lord.* Have you seen her, then?

*Gypsy Man.* Oh, no. I mean to say I understand why she should wander about in such unwonted wise.

*Lord.* O fool! O dull-brained fool! [*Stamps his foot.*] Moonstruck or not, I want her. You must have seen her, she followed in your wake.

*Gypsy Man.* Ah! Now I remember! As we left Blackscar we heard the stones roll down behind us and splash in the water. We all looked round, thinking to see the forester, Sir Harry's forester, who nosed around us all day long, harmless though we be. You remember, Peter?

*Peter.* Ay, thot a dun. A cud a broken t' knave 'is yarb wie' my cudgel.

*Gypsy Man.* And, as I was saying, we all started and turned round. Nothing saw I and Peter; but the woman swears she saw a figure all in white flit among the stones. At that we crossed ourselves and turned and hastened forward, fearing it was the water wraith, that lures belated travellers to their doom in the black bottomless whirlpool at the foot.

*Lord.* It was she, I swear. And which way went she?

*Gypsy Man.* That we cannot tell. For, as I said, we turned our heads away. But she did not come by here, and you have not met her on the track. She must have followed the path that overhangs the force and leads to a ford across the stream. That way is plainer; for the moment there seems no path this way.

*Lord.* [*Aghast*] Along the track that overhangs the force! She cannot, man! In daylight, when the water's low, the way is safe enough. But now, under the dark Brant, when the whirlpool's boiling like the devil's cauldron, and the stream's one mass of foam, to slip is death.

*Gipsy Man.* She has not passed this way.

[*Lord turns to rush off.*]

*Peter.* Wher bee'st agooin, measther?

*Lord.* [*Over his shoulder*] To get my horse.

*Peter.* Stop! [*Lord stops and turns round.*] Thee's none agooin t' long o' yon threacherous ledge ov a 'orseback?



*Lord.* I shall find her all the quicker. A minute saved now may be a life. [*Rushing off.*] Heavens! Let me not be a murderer!

*Peter.* [*Following and shouting after him*] Gather thy wits, mon. Ef oo's safe, oo's safe; an' ef oo's dhreant, oo's dhreant. Yo cudn't save 'er. Geet thee 'ome. Thee'st find 'er theer an grievin' an a'.

*Gypsy Man.* Let him go, you fool! Why did you try to stop him, you half-witted knave?

*Peter.* Bur 'e'll be dhreant as sure as 't day o' doom.

*Gypsy Man.* Let him. What's he to us? Couldn't you see that—— [*Lady comes in.*]

*Lady.* Has he gone? Where has he gone?

*Gypsy Man.* Safely home.

*Lady.* Oh, no. I heard it all. He's gone along the track above the force.

*Gypsy Man.* Well?

*Lady.* He'll be drowned! I heard you say the way was dangerous.

*Gypsy Man.* Well?

*Lady.* I must stop him!

*Gypsy Man.* Stop him! And why did you run away from him? Are you so anxious to get back to your bower? Are you so careful for the safety of him from whom you fled but an hour ago? Are you so soon wearied of life in the wilderness and of the free winds of heaven as to yearn already for the shelter of mouldy walls?

*Peter.* Nae dunnut fret thee, liddy. When t' fresh winds blow agen 'im o't top o' Blackscar, an t' spray o' t' force damps his brow, oo'll cool dean aw reet, thee nyed n't be afeart. Wha, 'is hond's firm an 'is yed's steady.

*Gypsy Woman.* Oh, let her go back to her dear lord. He'll be as glad to have her back to darn his hose as we to——

*Gypsy Man.* Hold your tongue, woman.

[*She sits down haughtily.*]

*Peter.* Yo connut stop 'im nae. Oo's eat o' yarin'.

*Curtain.*

### SCENE III.—*The Gypsy Camp.*

*The Gypsies are lying asleep, and the Lady is trying to kindle a fire.*

*Peter.* [*Raising himself on his elbow*] Hallo! Whot's yon?

*Lady.* I am trying to kindle a fire. I am chilled through, and the damp of the ground has reached my bones.

*Peter.* Bust ye, connut a felly sleep for ye? Howsome, I reckon it's time fer t' be stirrin'. [*Sits up, and stirs woman with his foot.*] Nae then, wake up! [*Yawns.*] [*To Lady*] So thee didstn' sleep o'er wel the neet?

*Lady.* I could not close my eyes for thinking of——of the cold and damp.

*Gypsy Woman.* Of your dear lord, you mean, my pretty duckling. Wondering whether he was sleeping in his own bed or in the torrent's; eh?

*Gypsy Man.* Curb your tongue, woman.

[*The Lady bends over the sticks, and busies herself with kindling the fire.*]

*Peter.* [*Getting up*] Yo connut make a fire thot road, apilin' t' firin' nigh up t' ut moon. Let me show yer.

*Gypsy Woman.* [*Getting up and peering in the Lady's face*] Of course the wood won't kindle, if she drenches it with her tears. [*The Lady looks up defiantly.*] There! I told you her eyes were red. [*The Lady disdains to answer.*]

*Peter.* Yern ud a been red, ef yer'd laid awake aw neet fro' t' cowl. [*Woman laughs derisively.*] Nae theer's a fire for thee. [*Arranges the sticks while he speaks.*] You mind it

carefully, un put a twig on nae un agen, ilka bigger un t' last, tell yer cumn to them knotty bronches, as a' snapped fro' t' owd withered ash up yon, as is aswingin' its gnarled owd arms o'er t' force. Et's a totherin' on t' brink awready; coom a gust of a sudden an 'twill send it ahurtlin' o'er t' Brant i' th' whirlpool, to a hend as more'n ean poor soul has met afore, I'll swar——  
Halloa! What's t' mather nae?

*Lady.* The smoke got in my eyes. It's out now.

*Peter.* Nae do as a' sen, yo mind t' fire, whiles a' goo un tak' a look at t' snares. [Goes off.]

*Gypsy Woman.* You leave the fire alone. You'll only put it out with your clumsy fingers. I'll see after that. The best thing you can do is to sit still on that log, where you'll do less harm than elsewhere. [Lady sits down.]

*Gypsy Man.* [Who has been watching her curiously] You look pale, and ill at ease.

*Lady.* I am faint with cold and hunger. I have not eaten a bite since yesternoon.

*Gypsy Man.* Well, we'll see what Peter brings back. Meanwhile, let's to business. Of course you know that gypsies cannot live on air. You must do something for a living if you stay with us. Let me see. You are too old to learn the light-fingered craft that profits most at fairs.

*Lady.* Don't say that, I will learn anything, if you show me how.

*Gypsy Man.* The craft is not one to please you, I fear.

*Lady.* O yes, I will do anything for the common good.

*Gypsy Man.* Well, since you press me, I will expound. 'Tis the art of lightening the pockets of thrifty farmers and stout burghers, by mild persuasion.

*Lady.* Thieving, you mean! I will never stoop to that. But you are not in earnest.

*Gypsy Man.* Do you think we can live on air? But I did not ask you to learn that particular craft. There are other and



more delicate ways of loosening purse-strings. Let me see. You have not the smooth and oily tongue to unfold the mysteries of the future to wide-eyed, gaping churls. But you have fingers skilled at embroidery. You shall make beaded shoes to sell at fairs; and saintly relics, pieces of the true cross, and sacred bones, bought of the paynims in our wanderings in the East, to warm the hearts of the portly brotherhood, and turn the superstitious awe of boors to profit.

*Lady.* Surely you are jesting with me. I fled from my Lord's bower to escape such trifling tinkering insincerity. What sordid meanness, what unwholesome trifling, what profanity you utter! You cannot mean it!

*Gypsy Woman.* Cannot mean it, indeed! Hark at her! How does she suppose we live? Does she suppose the earth heaps her bounties in our lap, or feeds us like a mother? Does she imagine that folk provide us with the needful things of life for the asking? I know what ails her; she is surfeited of her "life in the wilderness," and pines to go back to her bowers, to her Lord's castle. She may go; we will not hold her back against her will.

*Lady.* You lie, you bold-faced gypsy-woman!

*Gypsy Man.* We will not fall out. Hunger and cold have made us short of temper. Here is Peter. [*Enter Peter.*] What cheer?

*Peter.* No luck at all; 'T' wather wraith' I'll swar, or t' ghoosts o' dhreant men 'a witched t' snares. I've never known them a' fer t' fail this way afore.

*Gypsy Woman.* Your clumsy fingers rather, or your dull wits, that would set a snare upon a rock where never hare or rabbit went before. But what's to do?

*Peter.* So we mun fa' back on t' jannock as t' poor owd woman gave us. [*Fumbles in a sack.*] 'Twas harsh to frighten her like that, an' tak' t' oaf as oo were abaking 't th' embers.

*Gypsy Woman.* Fetch it out, man; we cannot wait while you tell the tale again thrice over.

*Peter.* A' i' good time, shrew—Here it is. [*Brings out a piece of black bread, and breaks it in pieces.*] Hm! Doughy still! Th' owd hag hadn't finished it. Wha didn't oo say as oo adn't? Hm! None much apiece. I say, woman, you give her yourn! You're used to going wi'eat, bur oo's fresh to our road o'livin.

[*Gypsy Woman draws her piece back indignantly.*

*Gypsy Man.* Do as you're bid, woman!

*Lady.* I do not want hers, nor mine.

[*Hands her piece back.*

*Peter.* What! Dunnut want it! Bur yer said yer were ahungert, and yer look it, an' a'.

*Lady.* I do not want it now.

*Gypsy Woman.* [*Sneering*] Not good enough for her dainty maw! But she'll have to get used to worse than this. May the thought cheer her spirits!

*Peter.* Hark! Th' steans agin o' Blackscar!

*Gypsy Woman.* I can hear no hoofs. The ring of iron on stone would carry hither. Whoever 't is, comes afoot.

*Peter.* [*Rising*] Let's steal a glance through yon gap.

*Gypsy Woman.* No, no, you fool; sit down. Sir Harry's forester, I'll warrant you; and a forester's no grief-stricken knight a seeking a poor lost lamb. He has eyes as keen as the windhover's.

*Peter.* Thee'rt reet, lass. He as is acomin' nae is a sight cooler than t' grief-crazed knight as coom a blundherin' throu t' briars yestere'en, i'stead o' by t' thrack, an left mony a flutherin' bit o' rag fer t' bloom ot' thorns, I'll swear, for his hose were tatthered like——

*Lady.* Grief-crazed! Did you say grief-crazed? You know he was wild with anger and resentment, not with grief. [*Appealing to Gypsy Man.*] Not grief-crazed, was he?



*Peter.* Grief-crazed, or aut else, 'ere comes t' forester. Quick, hide that skin, lass; car thee dean on't.

*Enter GREEN MAN.*

*Peter.* Hulloo! a forester it is, bur oo's none Sir Harry's. Good morrow, Master Forester: t' day 'as dawned leaden an' a'.

*[Lady jumps up with a cry.]*

*Lady.* O Robin, Robin, I am glad to see you. *[He stands awkwardly and says nothing.]* What, you think we mad? But you may well do so. But we are friends, Robin, old friends. You understand me. Ever since a maid of ten summers, I remember you. You always found a place among my father's henchmen at the board when you were in our neighbourhood. He used to say you were the best forester in the country-side. And then when Edward—you know Edward, my elder brother, was out with his hawks—and Hal who was kind but careless, had left me with a thoughtless gibe that girls are made to sit at home and sew, while men go kill the dinner, and I took my embroidery to my garden bower, you would sometimes tell me quaint lore of the woods and fields and wildernesses; and I, enthralled, would forget my embroidery, and prick my fingers, mayhap. You remember? *[He remains silent, fumbling with his cap. She continues, appealingly:]* You, who spend your life wandering about the country-side, understand why at last I could bear the life no longer; and one evening, when sunset gilded everything—but stay, 'twas but yestereven—there flooded on a sudden through the window, with the sunset breeze, a gypsy song, which melted my heart as snow; and I plucked off my rings and doffed my shoes, and stole out to follow the gypsies. There was magic in the song, that bound as the fastest spell. I had to go. But some potent hand has touched the world now, and turned it all to lead. I am cold and damp with sleeping on the ground; the stale wood-smoke has tainted my clothes, and I have found that gypsies are but mortals. I cannot go with them. My dream is vanished. Take me home with you to my Lord.

*Green Man.* You ask me what I cannot do, my Lady.

*Lady.* You cannot? O tell me, did my Lord come safely home last night? Selfish as ever, I forgot what first I should have asked. Your boding look reminds me. Did he come home safe?

*Green Man.* He came home, my Lady.

*Lady.* Thank heavens!

*Green Man.* Yes, he came home. The torrent carried him down, and we found him at sunrise where the water runs deep and still beside your bower. His horse lies wedged among the boulders yonder.

*Curtain.*

# BALDR'S DEATH

BY

RALPH DRENNAN (IIIa. 12-7)

AND OTHERS.



# BALDR'S DEATH.

## PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

OTHINN, Father of the Gods.  
 FRIGG, Mother of the Gods.  
 BALDR, the God of Light.  
 HODR, the God of Darkness.  
 LOKI, the God of Fire.  
 HERMODR, the Fleet-footed God.  
 HEIMDALR, the Guardian of the Rainbow Bridge.  
 BRAGI, the God of Song.  
 FREYR, the God of Summer.  
 THORR, the God of Thunder.  
 TYR, the God of War.  
 WALA, a Dead Prophetess.  
 SERVANTS.

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SCENES: Within and without a Hall in Asgard; except in  
 Act I., Sc. 3—A wild, rocky spot; and Act II.,  
 Sc. 1—Inside the Hall of Frigg.

## ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Outside a Hall in Asgard. Enter from opposite sides TYR and HEIMDALR.*

*Tyr.* Heimdalr, all hail! stout warden of the bridge,  
 How comes it that you quit your charge to-day  
 To roam in Asgard?



*Heimdallr.* All the gods have crossed.

*Tyr.* [*Laughing*] Save Thorr methinks.

*Heimdallr.* [*Laughing*] Ay, Thorr who has to wade,  
Lest his great bulk should crush the Rainbow Arch,  
And shut us from our home for evermore.

*Tyr.* Come they to council presently?

*Heimdallr.* Anon.

*Enter FREYR, BRAGI, HERMODR, and THORR.*

See Freyr holds talk with Bragi, and behind  
Follow the other Aesir. Greeting Gods!

*Tyr.* Even old Thorr has lost his lusty stride.

*Thorr.* Good morrow all.

*Hermodr.* How wide a sea of woe  
Stretches before us, and how little seems  
Our bark of council, all too weakly manned  
To venture on this deep anxiety.

*Thorr.* Baldr draws nigh! I cannot bear to look  
Upon his grief. Will you go in with me?

*[Exeunt except Hermodr and Heimdallr.]*

*Hermodr.* Now may the counsels of each several god  
Woven together, like the Rainbow Way,  
Lighten us from the deeps of present woe  
Back to the height of happiness again.

*Heimdallr.* O, solemn Fates! In this hour be dispersed  
His darkening mood, or let us know the worst.

*[Exeunt through curtains. Enter Baldr and Hodr.]*

*Hodr.* Nay, Baldr, be not sad, 'tis I who need  
To grieve, because I cannot see the light.  
For me the rising sun salutes the sky  
With wreaths of golden beams, alas, in vain.  
To me, alas, the trees and rivers call  
In vain, for I am blind and see them not.

*Baldr.* Brother, I understand the ills you bear,  
And pity them; more, I have feared of late  
That I am doomed to join you in the dark.  
Dim fancies crowd upon my wavering sight,  
And bear me downward irresistibly.

*Hodr.* I would I could forestall thy threatening doom,  
O Baldr; but within the power of Wyrð  
Lies all our hope and all that can be feared.

*[Exeunt, Baldr off. Curtains open to admit Hodr.]*

SCENE II.—*Inside the Hall in Asgard. All gods present  
except OTHINN, BALDR and LOKI.*

*Bragi.* He is not cheered by laughter or gay jest,  
But wanders sadly through the faded fields  
Pondering on nothing, for he knows not what  
Causes the sorrow of his anguished heart.

*Tyr.* Unhappy god of light.

*Thorr.* His course is run.

*Freyr.* Look in the courtyard where he walks alone.  
Thus has he paced through Asgard, day and night,  
For full five days.

*Enter OTHINN and attendant with a bowl of runes.*

*Othinn.* Are all the Aesir met?

*All.* Ay!

*Othinn.* Let us cast runes, and see which way they fall.

*[Takes bowl.]*

The mystic tokens of this solemn rite  
Shall draw aside the veil of mystery;  
And Baldr's destiny shall be revealed.

*[Othinn raises bowl of runes aloft.]*

O great Allfather, deign to hear my prayer.  
Grant that these awful runes, the speech of Fate,  
May not reveal that death is nigh to him.  
Come now, my sons, and cast a rune for Baldr.

*Bragi.* Now all the Soul of Song direct my throw!

[*They cast runic sticks in turn.*]

*Hermodr.* Prosper my venture, O ye Sisters Three!

*Tyr.* And mine.

*Thorr.* And mine.

*Freyr.* A hopeful rune I cast.

*Othinn.* Now all be silent! Turn away your heads.

Look not upon the sacred mystery. [*Bends forward.*]

I read here death! [*Confusion.*]

*All.* Ah! woe to all the world.

[*Exit Tyr, shouting in distance, "Baldr must die!"*]

*Hermodr.* Now fades the light, and darkness closes in,  
The ruin and destruction of the gods.

Now winter folds the earth in his embrace,

The sun is darken'd, and the moon shines faint,

And not a star is glimmering in the sky. [*Exit.*]

*Othinn.* Yet one more hope, ye gods, before the end.

Yet one more chance, for see, the runes are vague.

These lowering fears are yet but hovering round,

But drawing near, like to a bank of clouds

Upon the far horizon closing in.

One chance there is to grasp at.

*Heimdallr.* How a chance?

*Othinn.* Wala, the slumbering prophetess of old,  
Long buried now, will prophesy his fate.

Thrice will I circle her with magic spells,

Thrice will I strike upon her rocky bed,

And with the thrilling rune that wakes the dead

Will call her up, and make her answer me.

[*Exeunt severally Othinn and Thorr.*]

*Freyr.* Now must the council be dispersed, and each

Go to his several task. Thou, Heimdallr,

Must speed thee back to guard the Rainbow Bridge.

While I must summon all my magic skill

Upon the drooping flowers, frail Gerda's wreath  
 Now withering. For, alas their joy is gone.  
 The light is dying, and they cry aloud  
 For Baldr's radiance to return again.

*[Exeunt except Freyr and Bragi, who advance to Outer Stage. Enter to Inner Stage Frigg and Baldr.]*

*Frigg.* O Baldr, grieve not, for there is yet hope.  
 Look not so pale, dejected, and forlorn.

*Baldr.* O mother! on my heart lies death dark shade,  
 Look in my heart and see it for yourself.

*Frigg.* Alas, I know it, it has gathered close  
 About thy heart. Yet here is my device.  
 Hark, I will make all things in heaven and earth  
 Swear that they will not scathe the god of light.  
 The warlike giants in the frozen north,  
 The busy elves, living beneath the ground,  
 Shall swear they will not scathe the god of light.  
 From mighty oak, the monarch of the grove,  
 To venom'd herb, lodged in his shade, all things  
 Shall swear they will not scathe the god of light.  
 The falling cliff, the treacherous mountain tarn,  
 And every harmful thing in all the world,  
 Shall swear they will not scathe the god of light.  
 From towering mountain over lowland plain,  
 Even to the very verge of Niflheim—  
 I'll range abroad to save thee from thy doom.

*Baldr.* I thank thee, mother, for thy words of love,  
 They partly drive the anguish from my soul.

*Freyr.* Mother, accept our help in this your task.  
 We will go with you anywhere to help,  
 Even to the depths of gloomy Niflheim.



*Bragi.* With all the soul of song I'll succour you,  
My holy songs shall charm the soul of all  
And force agreement even against their will.

*Frigg.* Come with me then, my sons, and lend your aid.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*A wild, rocky spot.*

*Enter FRIGG.*

*Frigg.* Now after passing through these glassy glades  
To this wild spot I come, where nought but rocks  
Confront the eye. O swear, ye mighty rocks,  
That Baldr's sunlit life is safe with you.

*Voices.* We swear.

*Frigg.* Ye clinging creepers, twined among the rocks,  
Swear that ye will not tear his holy flesh.

*Voices.* We swear.

*Frigg.* Now all close clustering moss, harbour no thorn  
To pierce his foot as he fares sadly by.

*Voices.* We swear.

*Frigg.* [*Going*] And yon great eagle towering in the sky—  
Descend, and swear the oath as all have done. [Exit.]

*Enter LOKI.*

*Loki.* Ha! farewell, Frigg.  
Fail but one thorn to swear, and Baldr dies.  
Let her but miss the least important thing,  
And it will serve my purpose. Curse them all!  
Now reigns my evil spirit over me,  
For good being crush'd and smother'd in my breast,  
Dies like a wild flower trampled under foot,  
And evil devils cry out for revenge.  
Revenge me for my children's injuries  
I will against these silly simpletons;  
They who have banished my three children hence,  
Aided by cunning of the underworld.  
Fenris the Wolf they bound with dwarf-wrought chain,



Shaped on the anvil of the prying elves.  
 And Jormungandr, mightiest of my brood,  
 They threw into the sea, to wallow there,  
 Stirring the deep with his tempestuous tail.  
 And Hel, my only daughter, they cast forth  
 Down to the misty depths of Niflheim,  
 To overlook the tribes of coward dead.  
 These wrongs I will avenge; but, hark! who comes?  
 It is the father of the gods! Away! [Exit.

*Enter OTHINN.*

*Othinn.* Now must I wake the prophetess who lies  
 Among these rocks. Arise, I thee command!  
 O Wala, Wala, waken from thy grave,  
 Where thou hast lain for many a long, long year  
 In death's firm grasp; and answer me one thing.  
 For I have ridden many miles to-night,  
 And passed through many perils by the way  
 In search of thee, and now that I have found  
 Thy grey stone grave, come lift the mighty slab  
 That covers it, and hearken what I say. [Waits a moment.  
 I bid thee rise, by the World's Ash root,  
 I call thee by thy name, and bid thee rise. [Strikes tomb.  
 Now by these sacred runes, arise and speak.

*[Makes circles with runic staff.*

By all the knowledge in the darkening world,  
 By all the lore buried in cave and well,  
 Break once thy rock-bound tomb and answer me.

*[Tomb curtain opens, Wala rises.*

*Wala.* [Sings] Who wakens Wala  
                   Untimely, from her tomb?  
 Woe to him who wakens Wala  
                   Ere the day of doom.  
 Long have I lain in my lonely bed,  
 Stir not the silence of the dead.

Waken not Wala  
 As thou lovest light.  
 To the one who wakens Wala,  
 From the deeps of the night,  
 Shall be foretold the fate to befall  
 The light-giving Baldr, beloved of all.

*Othinn.* O Wala, tell me who the stir is for  
 In Hela's drear domain. Whose gorgeous seat  
 Is that bedeck'd with rings and amulets?  
 Say in whose honour stands the banquet there.

*Wala.* It is for Baldr that the feast is laid,  
 And Hel holds revel with attendant sprites.

*Othinn.* By whose hand then shall he be forc'd from home?

*Wala.* By darkness shall the light be driven away.

*Othinn.* Who shall avenge this sacrilegious deed?

*Wala.* The goddess Frigg shall bear another son,  
 Whose name is Wali. In one night he'll grow,  
 And neither wash his face nor comb his head  
 Until his brother's death has been avenged.  
 Now, leave me to repose again.

*Othinn.*

Farewell.

[*Tomb curtain closes.*]

Now will I hie me back unto the gods  
 And tell them of the breaking of the tomb.  
 O, if this prophecy could be revoked,  
 How blithely should I hie me back again!

[*Exit.*]

## ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Frigg sits spinning in her hall.*

*Frigg.* [Sings] Fleecy cloud and feathery snow,  
 Whirled from my spinning wheel,  
 However the howling winds may blow,  
     For mortal weal  
     Or mortal woe,  
     Fly high,  
     Ride in the sky,  
 Lest winter come frosty, and summer must go.  
  
 Sweeping mist and driving rain,  
     Sprayed from my spinning wheel.  
 Back to the realm of night again!  
     Let him not feel  
     Thy piercing pain,  
     Away, away,  
     From the light of day,  
 On thy swift-footed steed with the far-flowing mane.

*Enter LOKI disguised as an old woman.*

*Frigg.* What would'st thou have, old dame, that thou hast come  
 Unto the mother of the god of light?

*Loki.* O gentle Frigg, grant me refreshment here,  
 And let me rest myself in this, thy hall.

*Frigg.* Gladly I'll give you rest, and ease your limbs  
 Which many a mile I ween have trudg'd to-day.

[Calls to Servants.

Bring some refreshment to this dame.

*Servant.* [Without]                      Anon.

*Loki.* What means this stir in Asgard?

*Enter SERVANT with food and drink.*

*Frigg.*

Baldr's dreams

Of death have made the Aesir sorrowful,  
And I have travelled North, South, East and West  
In order that I might make all things swear  
That they will never scathe the god of light.  
And, now, the Aesir feel relieved indeed,  
For, all the weight is lifted from their minds;  
And jest and laughter ring throughout the halls.

*Loki.* Have all been made to swear this solemn oath :

*Frigg.* Not all. There is a little sprig of mistletoe,  
Grows on an oak, which thou perchance did'st pass  
In coming here. By the great barred gate  
It stands, and I did deem it all to small  
To need to make it swear the solemn oath.  
Now eat you well. For you look thin and wan,  
Like to the summer flowers, which Baldr's mood  
Has caused to fade.

*Loki.*

I thank thee, gentle Frigg.

[*Eats.*

*Frigg.* [*Coming on to outer stage. Aside.*]

O Baldr, Baldr, still I fear thy death.  
Methinks ten doors stand open against thy life,  
And nine I bar, but yet the tenth remains,  
The deadly passage through which evil comes.

[*Remains in thought.*

*Loki.* [*Behind*] O worthy Frigg, confiding, innocent Frigg,  
Plainly I see by her contracted brow  
She worries about his unhappiness.  
Now must I hie me hence, O gentle Frigg.

[*Aloud.*

*Frigg.* Farewell, old dame, love guide you on your way.

[*Exit Loki. She steps in front and the curtains  
close behind her.*



The sacred fires have dwindled on the hearth;  
 The maidens tend them well, but all in vain.  
 The sun's obscure, 'tis but a misty ball  
 That glows and fades as each successive cloud  
 Covers its face and leaves it clear again.  
 And much I fear me that my work's in vain.  
 For, from the mountains far in Jotunheim,  
 The mists come sweeping down the gentle slopes,  
 To blot out light, and usher darkness in. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—A *Hall in Asgard.*

*All the gods are present except Othinn, Freyr,  
 Hodr, Bragi and Loki.*

*Heimdallr.* I would some news would come of Baldr's fate.

*Tyr.* Then see your wish fulfilled, for here comes Othinn.

*Enter OTHINN.*

What news?

*Othinn.* Bad news! The prophetess has spoke  
 And told the worst of what could come to pass.

Baldr must go to gloomy Niflheim. [*Confusion.*

*Baldr.* Brothers,  
 Why do ye weep at winter's coming on?  
 Is autumn always sad? Is there no joy  
 In fruitfulness? for now we near the end  
 Of such a golden time as ne'er has been  
 The lot of any earlier court of gods.  
 See, in the garden, yonder bending vines,  
 How the rich mellow clusters burden them  
 With purple wealth. O how can we be sad  
 At harvest now, when all around is toil,  
 And gladsome toil, mirth mingled? Uplifted thus,  
 Why should we dread the telling of the seer?

*Enter FREYR and BRAGI.*

*Freyr.* Tidings, ye gods, news of the queen of heaven!

*Bragi.* All hail, my brother! Banish dread of death,  
And lay aside the fear of Hela's realm.

Thy mother's love hath conquered, and all things  
Rejoice that light yet lives upon the earth.

*Freyr.* Summer and song together on the hills  
Have flown with her and helped her faithfully.

I flew among the highest mountain peaks  
And summoned forth the eagles and the goats,  
The wolves and bears and all that live so high,  
And made them take the solemn binding oath.

Then to the seashore I betook myself;  
And Jormungandr lifted up his head,  
Proclaiming loud to all who wished to hear  
That he would never hurt the god of light.

*Bragi.* Hearken, ye gods, unto your listening ears  
I will recount what Mother Frigg has done.  
To every thing she went and made it swear  
That it would never scathe the god of light.  
Even the daisies with their golden hearts  
And snowy petals lifted up their heads  
And swore the solemn oath for Frigga's sake.

*Othinn.* Well done, my sons. This is good news indeed.

*[Exit with Baldr.]*

*Thorr.* Good news you bring. Come now, let us rejoice.

*[Cheers and shouts.]*

*Heimdallr.* Set up our spears to crown with iron rings.

*Thorr.* Come, see how many bolts my Mjolnir  
Can drive into the floor with single thud.

*Hermodr.* Nails, nails, bring nails!

*Bragi.* Now for the hammer stroke.

*Freyr.* There's none but Thor in Asgard wields the hammer.

*Severat.* What shall we do?

*Tyr.* [*Mounting table*]

I'll keep this place and you can all attack.

*Thorr.* My game's the better!

*Freyr.* [*To Tyr*] Yours is a childish game.

*Tyr.* [*Getting down again*] Nay, mine puts yours in shade.

*Several.* [*Ranging themselves on sides*] This is more fun.

*Thorr.* [*Holding hammer aloft*]

Come on, all ye who favour Miolnir!

*Tyr.* [*Raising sword*]

Rally round me and vindicate the sword. [*Battle threatens.*]

*Hermodr.* [*Standing calmly in the middle*]

Why should the sword disturb the hammer's peace?

For the hammer makes the sword, not sword the hammer.

[*They rush in on all sides and battle rages round Hermodr.*]

*All.* [*Shout*] For the sword!

For the hammer!

Jorr—Jorr!

Miolnir!

Defiance!

Down with the sword!

Out upon Hermodr! [*Tyr's side wins.*]

*Tyr.* Since we have conquered in this mighty scrum,  
I shall dictate what game we are to play.

[*Leaps on to the table.*]

I now defy you all to heave me hence.

He who can do it shall be chief instead.

*Thorr.* [*Mounting the other end of the table*]

Get thee hence, hulk, or by my hammer's might,  
I'll smite thee to the centre of the earth.

*All.* [*Shout*] Go in and win, old Thorr!

Upset the table!

Let's join in fight!

I'll depose the two

*Enter BALDR quietly.*

*Hermodr.* Might we not give Baldr leave to speak?

*Bragi.* Or should we not set him upon the board?

*Heimdalr.* Shield-high we'll carry him.

*Several.* [*Baldr smiles sadly. They shout*]

Ay, ay, Jorr—Jorr!

*Thorr.* Nay, carry him on shoulder from the hall.

*All.* [*Shout*] Ay, ay, Jorr—Jorr. Baldr! Baldr! Oy!

[*They carry Baldr out. Curtains close.*]

### ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Outside the hall in Asgard.*

*Music.—Enter BALDR.*

*Baldr.* I would this clinging gloom would fade away.  
I am a denizen of deepest night—  
No break on the horizon of my dole—  
No isle of hope amidst this sea of woe.

[*Laughter and shouts heard.*]

The gods rejoice, but nothing can dispel  
The clouds of sorrow that are gathering here.  
I dream of nothing else but death, death, death.  
My thoughts revert to nothing else but death.  
Now, like to thunder clouds, these troubles mount  
Into my heart and on my soul discharge  
Their burden of destruction and of death.

*Enter unseen HODR, FRIGG following.*

I would give everything if these things were  
Merely the substance of an idle dream.

[*Exit.*]

*Hodr.* Baldr, my brother, I would die for thee  
If thou could'st brighten up the earth again  
With thy sunbeams and shine on Asgard towers.



But here I stand friendless and all alone ;  
 I know not whether day is here or night,  
 And all the beauties of the spring are lost  
 Upon these rolling sightless eyes of mine.

*Frigg.* O my poor Hodr, how sorrow dwells upon thee.

[*Shouts and laughter heard.*]

But hark ! what means this shouting that I hear ?  
 The clash of weapons ! Do the Aesir fight  
 Among themselves about some petty quarrel ?

*Hodr.* Nay, be not frightened for thy mighty sons.  
 They do not fight. They only shout in play.  
 Bragi hath told them of thy loving flight  
 O'er all the earth, and now to test the oath,  
 Binding on all, they hurl their baneful spears  
 At Baldr's breast.—They cannot injure him.

*Frigg.* I know they cannot ; still, I fear some hurt.  
 O Baldr ! they will harm thee. Cease the play.  
 Stop them from playing with a brother's life ! [Exeunt.

*Curtains open.*

## SCENE II.—*Inside the Hall.*

*Enter LOKI, trimming a bough of mistletoe with  
 a dagger.*

*Loki.* Aha ! behold the little sprig of mistletoe  
 Which Baldr's careful mother thought too weak  
 To harm the life of her beloved son.  
 But by my incantations and my charms  
 It shall be changed into a hardy shaft,  
 Strong as the Ash that doth uphold the world,  
 And deadly as the nightshade—night-shade—ah !  
 Once have I lent my aid, but only once ;  
 When in the dead of night Thrym came and stole  
 Thor's hammer from his bedside as he slept.

For once that I have helped the gods, I've played  
 Them false a hundred times, but I remain  
 In Asgard still and am not banished hence;  
 And lack nor meat, nor drink. The gods not yet  
 Are hostile, but suspicion's in their looks.

I am avoided; no one crosses me  
 Or tries to, for my power lies deep in guile  
 Not strength, and by dark ways I yet revenge.  
 Strange tales there are of giants slain by guile,

*[Laughs diabolically.]*

Strange tales also of brothers' treachery.  
 Their blood staining a tottering wall bears witness  
 To what I did. And time has shown more things.  
 But who comes here? Stow ye away my thoughts.  
 I'll stand aside. *[Draws himself up stiff and still.]*

*Enter HODR slowly. A plan occurs to Loki.*

See! there's my instrument,

*Hodr.* Lo, I am blind and cannot see the light,  
 Black darkness hems me in on every side.  
 The rising of the sun is nought to me,  
 His rays can never pierce the murky veil  
 That overhangs mine eyes eternally.

*Loki.* *[Aside]* Enough of talk; now is the time to act.

*[Comes forward. Shouts and laughter heard.]*

Good morrow, Hodr. Hark, the gods rejoice.  
 But you, a dripping cliff, for ever weep,  
 Your head being hidden in a gloomy cloud.

*Hodr.* Living in darkness, I have never seen  
 His light which gladdens every heart but mine.

*Loki.* Hearken to me, I will relate what passed.  
 I saw the gods all standing in a ring,  
 And in the midst of them dear Baldr stood  
 Unharm'd amidst the weapons of the gods,  
 Which they were pouring in on every side.

For everyone in turn did shoot an arrow,  
 Or throw a spear, or sling a stone at him.  
 But nothing hits him, all glide safely past.  
 Now, wilt thou join us and share the merry sport?

*[Spins round and laughs.]*

*Hodr.* Thou knowest Allfather will not let me wear  
 A byrnie bright or gird a shining sword  
 For I am blind.

*Loki.* This is no time of war.  
 And thou could'st not hurt Baldr in any case.  
 Wilt thou not do him honour in one throw?

*[Is about to put mistletoe shaft into Hodr's hand.]*

*Hodr.* Ay, willingly, if thou wilt guide my hand,  
 Lest I should throw and hit some other god.

*[Enter the other gods with various weapons. Loki  
 conceals the shaft beneath his cloak.]*

*Freyr.* This bodes no good, for evil to prevent  
 Our coming hither.

*Thorr.* What mischief does he plot?

*Hermodr.* We come to play, thou comest with baneful look,  
 With stealthy gait and cunning glance around.

*Tyr.* *[Stepping forward]*  
 Enough of this. Let us forget these ills.  
 Come, Baldr, stand thee here. We'll throw at thee  
 Our glittering brown-edged swords and shining spears.

*[The others stand in a group and discuss precedence  
 while Baldr speaks. He shivers and draws his  
 mantle about him.]*

*Baldr.* They think all's well; fear stands not in their hearts;  
 But in mine own, 'neath mingled feeling lies  
 The fear of death from brother's spear or sword.  
 But I will humour them even though it bring me death.  
 I'll bid farewell for ever to these halls,  
 Farewell, my home, white-towered Breidablik.  
 Farewell, Asgard, where I have lived so long.

*Freyr.* Stand back for Tyr!

*Tyr.* Make way for Tyr to throw!

*[Tyr throws his sword and misses Baldr.]*

*Several.* A miss! A miss! By Yggdrasil, a miss!

*[Laughter, and shouts of "Throw," "Miss," etc.]*

*Tyr.* I've never missed the mark before to-day!

*Thorr.* *[Shouting]*

Stand back and give me room to swing Miolnir!

*[Throws his hammer and misses widely.]*

O Ragnarok, does palsy unnerve my arm?

*Heimdallr.* *[Throwing]* A miss! The prophecy is true. A miss!

*Freyr.* *[Throwing]* O roots of Yggdrasil, how wide!

*Several.* Miss, miss!

*Hermodr.* I'll try a throw although I am not skilled

In arts of war. *[Throws and misses, great laughter follows.]*

*Loki.* *[To Hodr]* Do not stand idle. Wilt not spend a shaft?

I have one with me, and I'll guide thy hand.

*Hodr.* Give me the bow and shaft then. Guide my hand.

*[He shoots the mistletoe arrow with the aid of*

*Loki. Baldr reels and falls. Confusion.]*

*[Exit Loki swiftly.]*

*All.* He's fallen.

He bleeds.

How now! Villain!

Staunch the wound.

*Thorr.* Call Frigg.

*Freyr.* *[Runs off shouting]* Traitor; we are undone!

*Bragi* }

*Tyr* }

Revenge!

*[Cries heard without.]*

*Hermodr.* Whose fatal hand hath hurled the deadly shaft?

*Hodr.* What have I done that this commotion wakes

The very stones within the vaulted halls?

Why do ye cry 'Revenge'? What have I done?



*[He turns about appealingly. All shrink back from him in awe.]*

Is Baldr hurt that with your angry shouts  
Ye so disturb the quiet of the day?  
Say, where is Loki?

*Re-enter FREYR.*

*[Frigg rushes in and falls upon the body.]*

*Frigg.* What! Baldr! Liest thou here? The son I loved  
Above all sons thou wert. But now thou liest  
In death's firm grasp. I loved thee with a love  
Unequalled, but now death has torn thee from me.  
Now Asgard mourns thy death and cries are heard  
Re-echoing through the lofty halls where thou  
Wast born, and lived for many a year—with me.  
O Baldr, Baldr! *[Weeps bitterly.]*

Why did I disdain  
This fatal sprig of mistletoe which slew  
Thee in thy prime? Baldr! Ah, woe is me  
That I should ever live to see this day.

*Enter OTHINN.*

*[Freyr tries to comfort Frigg.]*

*Othinn.* O Baldr, Baldr, thou art lost to me.  
For there thou liest never to rise again.  
Woe be to Asgard! Woe to all the world!  
For Ragnarok draws nigh, the Twilight looms  
When total darkness shall reign upon the earth.  
We'll bear him hence to his high hall once more,  
And for the last time. Sons, ah dry your eyes,  
And let us carry him to his ring-prowed ship,  
And send him blazing towards the setting sun.  
O my son Baldr, Baldr, my son, farewell.

*[Several prepare to take up the body. The curtains  
close and Bragi steps in front to speak the  
Epilogue.]*

*Bragi.* Baldr is dead, and Frigga weeps alone  
In darkened chambers where his body lies  
Lovely in death. The tossing sea is hushed,  
And the wild eagle's scream is heard no more.  
Valhalla's ways are dark; none revel there  
Since Baldr's death has cast a gloom on all.  
The moon has risen o'er a weeping world,  
And he has sunk into his last repose.

*Curtain.*

# FREYR'S WOOING

BY

A. J. STOREY (IV. 12-10)

AND OTHERS.





# FREYR'S WOOING.

## PERSONS IN THE PLAY.

FREYR, the God of Summer.

GERDA, daughter of the Giant Gymir.

NIORD, Freyr's Father, God of the Winds.

SKIRNIR, chief servant to Freyr.

BEGGVIR } Husband and wife. Two under servants to Freyr.  
BEYLA }

Servant to Gerda.

## SCENES.

1. A Hall in Asgard. (Inner)
2. The Courtyard of Freyr's Palace. (Outer)
3. Gymir's Hall. (Inner)
4. The Courtyard of Freyr's Palace. (Outer)
5. Iduna's Grove. (Inner and Outer)
6. A Hall in Asgard. (Inner)

SCENE I.—A *Hall in Asgard (Inner)*.

*Enter FREYR.*

*Freyr.* Now will I dare to mount the Allfather's throne,  
This dreaded seat where none but he may sit. [*Mounts throne.*  
How fair the prospect spread before my eyes :  
Far, far I overlook the realms of men  
Unto the misty bourn of Nifleheim.  
My little elves are busy in the underworld  
Shaping the shining metal cunningly  
To mighty swords and shields and burnished arms.  
And Surtr waves on high his flaming brand,  
Guarding the ponderous gate of Nifleheim.

Yonder is Jotunheim where lately Thor  
 Has left the hills bestrewn with ruined halls  
 And smoking towers, which but a year ago  
 Stood high the palace of the villainous Thrym.  
 Upon that mountain crest is Gymir's house,  
 Enriched with all the treasure he has stolen.  
 But soft, who enters there? 'Tis Gymir's daughter,  
 How fair she is! How like the morning star!  
 For when she raised her hand to turn the latch,  
 The gleaming whiteness of her lifted arm  
 Shone out so bright that all the world was lit.  
 O, that I had her love. O Gerda, Gerda,

*Enter NIORD.*

Not even Freyja can compare with thee  
 In beauty . . .

*Niord.* [*Shocked*] My son, my son, tut tut, why are you here?

*Freyr.* Father, she stands unequalled in the land;  
 I cannot live unless she be my wife.

*Niord.* Tut tut, my son, tut tut! what meanest thou?  
 This is unseemingly talk for thee, my son.

*Freyr.* O, for her love! I would that she were mine . . .

*Niord.* Skirnir! What ho! Skirnir, I say, come forth.

*Enter SKIRNIR promptly.*

*Skirnir.* What would you have?

*Niord.* [*Fussily*] My son is very ill.  
 He raves about some person he has seen.  
 Go to; and cure him; if thou dost succeed,  
 I will reward thee well.

*Skirnir.* My gracious lord,  
 I will employ my greatest powers therein.

*Niord.* Outrageous son; Puff, Puff! Preposterous! [*Exit.*

*Skirnir.* My master Freyr, I pray thee let me know  
 What sadness clouds thy brow. O god of summer,  
 What aileth thee?

*Freyr.* O, Skirnir, she is fair.  
 I love her, and my heart brims o'er with joy.  
 O, I would give all summer's bloom for her.

*Skirnir.* [*With exaggerated patience*]  
 Pray tell me, master, whom thou speakest of.

*Freyr.* I saw a dream of beauty far away  
 Upon the mountain crests of Jotunheim,  
 A maiden fair as—

*Skirnir.* My good master, come.  
 Tell me her kin that I may go to them  
 And woo her in thy name. I pray thee, tell.

*Freyr.* Her arms are whiter than the palest lily  
 That ever fading spring brought forth to fill  
 The lonely vale with honey-laden breath.  
 And while she paused, like to a stately swan  
 Borne on the silver surface of a lake,  
 A motion visible invisible drew on,  
 Took her away, and left me sorrowing.

*Skirnir.* Who is the maiden that hath moved thee so?

*Freyr.* Her name is Gerda, daughter to Gymir's wife.  
 Go thou to woo her, and if thou dost succeed  
 My magic sword shall evermore be thine. [*Gives sword.*  
 And take thou one of Iduna's golden fruit,

[*Gives apple and ring.*

And magic Draupnir, and lay them at her feet  
 If she consents to be my wedded wife.

[*Freyr looks down into his shield on the floor.*

*Skirnir.* See, as he gazes on his burnished shield,  
 The fair reflection of his wistful eyes.

[*Takes shield and looks in.*

By summer's sun! This is far more puissant  
 To charm the lovely Gerda than Draupnir,  
 Or twenty thousand of these other gifts.

Come on with me, thou art my chiefest charm.  
May fortune favour me in this exploit.

*Curtains close.*

SCENE II.—*The Courtyard of Freyr's Palace (Outer).*

*Enter BEYLA with a pan.*

*Beyla.* What times we have! never a minute's peace,  
But wash, and clean, and scrub the livelong day.  
Just fed the poultry. What a noise they make!  
Fluttering and cackling and fighting for the food.  
The swaggering roosters lord the hungry crowd,  
[*Struts, holding pan behind.*

While humble hens, unruffled and sedate,  
Avoid the crush and pick the far-flung grain.  
Scratcher comes out, then, trailing far behind,  
Her noisy brood exert their little legs,  
And with shrill 'cheeps' come racing for a share.

*Enter SKIRNIR, putting on cloak.*

*Skirnir.* I'm on an errand for my master Freyr.  
See that your husband tends the sacred boar. [Exit.

*Beyla.* Just left the chickens, now the boar makes work.  
[*Lowling of cattle heard.*

And there the cows are waiting to be milked.  
They nearly always overturn the pail. [Cleans pan.  
Hard is my lot. My husband is no help.  
He makes a mess of everything he does.  
See, here he comes. I wonder what's amiss.

*Enter BEGGVIR, hurried and worried.*

*Beggvir.* He's lost! He's lost! O dear, he's run away!  
[*Rushes about and throws up his hands in despair.*

*Beyla.* [*Calmly*]

Something is always lost. Beggvir, hast done  
As thou wert told, and groomed the sacred boar?



*Beggvir.* [*Excitedly*]

What say'st thou there? The blessed pig is lost!

*Beyla.* [*Bending with hands on knees*]

What dost thou mean? The master's sacred boar?

*Beggvir.* [*Shouting*] I mean the pig, the blessed, blessed pig.  
[*Resignedly*] I used to be the butler to a god,  
But now I am promoted from that place  
To be a beastly swineherd. Mucky job.  
And now I've lost the pig, so I am nought.  
I would I'd never seen the animal.

*Beyla.* [*Shocked*] O, hush!

*Beggvir.* Why in the world must every god  
Have some such pet to give us folk hard work?

[*Telling on his fingers.*]

My master keeps a pig; his sister, cats.  
Odin has ravens, Thor his team of goats.

*Enter NIORD, looking for the cause of uproar.*

*Niord.* What means this noise? Beggvir, come answer me.

[*Beggvir looks crestfallen.*]

What say'st thou, what? Tut, tut, what make you here?

*Beyla.* That lazy man, nothing will make him work.

*Niord.* Tush, woman, tush, my business is with him.  
Get thee away, and get thine own work done.

[*Exit Beyla offended.*]

Come, hast thou tended to the sacred boar?

*Beggvir.* I cannot, master, for the beast is lost.

*Niord.* Tut, tut, it cannot be, it is not true.  
Rude knave, I'll beat thee if the boar is lost.  
The Sacred Goldenbristle!

[*Seizes him.*]

*Beggvir.* All I know  
Is what I say again, the pig is lost. [*Niord beats him.*]  
I'd hold of him to clean his bristles up

When suddenly he slipped from out my hands,  
Knocking me down,            [*Sits down suddenly, thus escaping,*  
*and looks up at Niord.*

And then he rushed away.

[Here they talk at once while Beggvir  
retreats in a sitting posture.

And jumped the ditch and out of sight he went,  
Leaving me with the brushes in my hand.

*Niord.* What meanest thou, knave, by this unmeaning talk? Tush, I say, tush, go straight and find the boar. [*Exit Beggvir.* And this is how the servants do their work! [*Exit.*

*Curtains open.*

SCENE III.—*Gymir's Hall.*

GERDA *sitting.* *Enter* SERVANT.

*Servant.* Mistress, there is a message from Asgard.  
The messenger would speak with thee alone.

*Gerda.* Admit him and depart.

*Servant.* That will I do.

*Enter* SKIRNIR.

*Skirnir.* Fair greeting, lady.

*Gerda.* Sir, I wish thee well.

I pray thee tell me what thy message is.

*Skirnir.* Away in Asgard, when on Odin's throne,  
My master Freyr beheld thee, and straightway  
His heart was smitten with a lasting love.  
And so he sends me on an embassy  
To say that he would have thee for his wife.

Gerda. [*Indignantly*]  
Go home and tell thy lord that I refuse  
To marry one that I have never seen.

*Skirnir.* [*Aside*] How shall I dare to tell my master this?  
[*To her*] So much he pines away for love of thee  
That surely when he hears this he will die.

O lady, think again before thou say'st  
What thou wilt do. O, do not let him die.

*Gerda.* To me is nought whether he dies or lives.  
I will not go with thee to be his wife.

*Skirnir.* [*Proffering ring*]  
See what a present sends my master here;  
If you consent, he seals it with this ring.  
'Tis Draupnir from which every ninth night drop  
Eight others, each as precious as the first.

*Gerda.* [*Scornfully*]  
O, as for that, dost thou not see this ring,  
Two drop from it each night. How likest thou that?  
*[Skirnir is a little discouraged.]*

Dost think I'll give my love for such a toy?

*Skirnir.* But see, I have another treasure yet.  
Lo, this is one of Iduna's golden fruit;  
I give it with the ring.

*[He holds the apple before her and she  
knocks it angrily from his hand.]*

*Gerda.* What toys are these?  
There's nothing in this house that is not worth  
Ten times the puny toys thou offerest me.

*Skirnir.* Art thou determined then to kill the one  
Who loves thee best? *[Draws sword.]*

But he shall be revenged!  
For I will slay thee ere I go away. *[Threatens.]*

*[Gerda looks at him with unflinching scorn.]*  
Now I will do it. Come. I will. Dispatch.

*[He retreats and rubs his chin in thought.]*  
But stay—I give to thee but one chance more.

*[Proudly]* Take thou his shield; and see, my master's face.  
*[Looks in, then hands shield to Gerda.]*

I'll cut these runes, and if ere I have done  
Thou hast not given consent, thou shalt be doomed

To marry one whom thou canst never love.

*[Turns away and cuts a tally.]*

What dost thou think? How likest thou his face?

The time grows short.

*[Gerda has seen the face and becomes enraptured.]*

*She still gazes on the shield.*

Gerda. Yes. I will marry him.

How fair he looks. O Freyr, how I do love thee.

*[Turns suddenly to Skirnir and says quickly.]*

Say that I love him more than words can tell,

And I will marry him. *[Looks again on shield.]*

Skirnir. *[Cheerily collecting ring, apple and other things.]*

Take thou the gifts!

When wilt thou meet my master?

Gerda. For nine days

I must stay here, then in Iduna's grove

I'll meet him on the morrow of the tenth.

Skirnir. *[Whimsically]*

I pray thee, lady, give me back my shield.

Gerda. *[Eagerly]* O let me keep it, and I'll return to thee  
A magic one that nought can ever pierce.

This is for thee to prove that I am true. *[Gives a shield.]*

Skirnir. I thank thee.

*[She returns to her gazing while Skirnir waits.]*

Shall I now go back to Freyr?

*[Sits]* Or send a messenger and wait for thee?

Gerda. No, haste thee back unto thy master Freyr

*[Stirring him.]*

And make preparation for the wedding day.

*Curtains close.*

SCENE IV.—*The Courtyard of Freyr's Palace.*

*Enter NIORD and SKIRNIR.*

Niord. How hast thou fared upon thine embassy?



*Skirnir.* I have succeeded after much delay,  
But never have I had so much debate  
On anything I have been sent about.

*Niord.* Yes, yes, I know. *[Forgets to listen.*

But tell me what she said.

*Skirnir.* She scorned the offer of my master's love  
And said 'twas nought whether he died or lived.

*Niord.* Fie, fie; she is too proud.

*[Niord is muttering comments all the while.*

*Skirnir stops his narrative in despair.*

Skirnir, go on;

Stopping without a cause. Go on, I say.

*Skirnir.* Have patience, master, then I will proceed.  
I showed her all the treasures I had brought,  
But she showed me treasures incomparable  
With any wonders that the Aesir have.

*Niord.* Skirnir, no doubt. O 'tis a rich, rich maid.  
'Twere meet that she were married to my Freyr.  
But now continue; Sir, go on, go on.

*Skirnir.* *[Speaking rapidly]*  
At last I took a stick and, cutting runes,  
Told her that in the shield she'd see his face,  
And if, by the time that I had done the charm  
She had not given consent, she would be doomed  
To marry one whom she could never love— *[Nodding pertly.*  
And that succeeded.

*Niord.* *[Delightedly]* 'Twas a noble trick.  
Ay, well thought out. I will reward thee well.  
But then what happened? then what did you do?

*Skirnir.* I asked her for the shield, but she replied  
That she would keep it. So she gave me instead  
This magic one, so I am well equipped.

*[He advances with sword and shield.*

*Niord falls back protesting.*

The boldest now will quail beneath my gaze.  
 The strongest blades shall break upon my shield  
 And magic byrnies part beneath my sword

*Niord.* Skirnir, I say! Come, Skirnir. Answer me.  
 When comes she hither?

*Skirnir.* Now. To-day she said  
 She'd meet my master in Iduna's grove.

*Niord.* Go we to meet and bless the happy pair.

*[Puts up his hands and makes to go off wrong way. Skirnir mimics his posture and follows.]*

*They keep leading opposite ways.*

*Skirnir.* Yes, do we so. Come on, I'll lead the way.

*Niord.* This is the way.

*Skirnir.* Come on.

*Niord.* Ah yes, lead on. *[Exeunt.]*

*Curtains open.*

#### SCENE V.—*Iduna's Grove.*

*Enter FREYR.*

*Freyr.* Here on this flowery bank will I await  
 The coming of my love from Giantland.  
 Birds, sing your sweetest song to welcome her,  
 Flowers, make your softest carpet for her feet,  
 And clouds, give surest guidance to her steps.  
 But soft, I see her, coming from afar.

*Enter GERDA.*

Long have I waited to make thee, sweet, my bride,  
 Nine days and nights at length have passed away,  
 And thou art come. *[Takes both her hands.]*

Welcome to Asgard's realm.

*Gerda* Ah, Freyr, my love, long seemed the time to me,  
 And yet I might not come before to-day.

*Freyr.* Come, sit upon this bank and let our hearts  
 Pour forth the tide of love. *[They sit.]*

*Gerda.* O, summer's king,  
 For all my life I dwelt frost-bound amid  
 Vast plains of snow and lonely fields of ice,  
 Unbroken by the curve of any way,  
 Save for the solitary footprints of a bear  
 Who shuffled by maybe a week before.  
 A wilderness encircled and bound in  
 By the eternal hills of Jotunheim.  
 The very hour I left that cold, bleak land  
 I felt the soothing influence of thy reign,  
 For all my way was marked upon the ground  
 By snow-flakes golden-hearted. What are they?

*Freyr.* They are the daisies, starring for thy feet,  
 The heaven on which they walk. And they are thine.

*Gerda.* I was attended on my happy way  
 By flashing jewels, and a choir of song.

*Freyr.* Those jewels thou hast seen, floating in air,  
 Or flitting in and out among the trees,  
 Are feathered minstrels, who with mellow throats  
 Are fluting homage, knowing they are thine.

*Gerda.* And o'er my head light clouds went sailing on  
 To guide me hither.

*Freyr.* For the clouds are thine,  
 Nay, Gerda, all my power upon the earth  
 Lies at thy feet, for I myself are thine.

*Gerda.* O Freyr, in answer to thy gifts of love.  
 I make return, not only of myself,  
 But would out-gift thee [*rising*]*—*But here Skirnir comes.  
 [*Laughing*] And who is this that comes along with him?

*Freyr.* It is my father Niord, god of the winds.

*[Skirnir greets them. Niord potters about.]*

*Skirnir.* Good morrow, lord and lady.

*Freyr* }  
*Gerda* }

And to you.

*Freyr.* Father, this is my bride.

*Niord.*

Eh! yes, 'tis so.

*[Takes her hand and pats it.]*

Tut, tut, I know not why I so forget.

*Skirnir.* Master, dost thou remember thy late promise :  
That if I did succeed thy sword was mine?

*Freyr.* Yea, keep it now and use it mightily.  
Fight well for Asgard, and in battle fierce  
Think on thy master who rewarded thee.

*Gerda.* And think on Gerda, of whom thou hadst that shield  
From out the treasure-holds of Gymir's house.

*Skirnir.* All shall be done to show my love for you.

*Freyr.* Give us thy blessing, Father, wilt thou not?

*Niord.* None more forgetful in Asgard than I,  
Who now forget to bless my only son.

*[They kneel, and he lays his hands on their heads.]*

Bless you, my children, happy may ye be,  
And nothing mar the pleasure of your lives.

*Enter BEGGVIR and BEYLA excitedly.*

*Beggvir* } O, Skirnir, we have found the blessed pig!  
*Beyla* }

*Skirnir.* Hush, do ye not see our master and his bride?

*Freyr.* *[Coming forward]*

What meanest thou by this wild behaviour, man?

*Beggvir.* *[Kneeling]*

Master, I say I've found the——sacred boar.

*Freyr.* 'Tis lucky, knave, and I will pardon thee  
If thou hast well prepared our wedding feast.

*Beggvir* } We thank thee, gracious master, for this boon.  
*Beyla* }

*[Skirnir has taken a stick from Beggvir's hands  
behind his back. He now gives it to Frey.]*

*Skirnir.* My lord, a message has from Odin come.

*Freyr.* I am by this desired straightway to take  
Thee, my fair bride, to Odin at Gladsheim.



*Gerda.* Then let us haste, Odin I long to see.

[*Curtains close as Skirnir, Beggvir, and  
Beyla step forward.*]

*Skirnir.* Say, what have ye prepared for the wedding feast?

*Beggvir.* [*Telling on his fingers*]

Two calves and three large sheep for mighty Thor.

*Beyla.* Four turkeys, five fat fowls——O come and see!

*Beggvir.* [*Standing in the way with hands on hips and  
wagging his head*]

But Skirnir, don't you go away no more;

We've had the greatest rating of our lives.

*Beyla.* [*Shouting*] He went and lost the pig!

*Skirnir.* O, give me peace!

And come, by now the gods will have arrived

To greet my lord and lady in the hall.

[*Curtains open. Gerda and Freyr stand on a platform  
at back. The gods walk across one by one.*]

The feast is all prepared. See, they come in;

For where we finish, there the gods begin.

*Curtain.*

## EPILOGUE

Our plays are done. To all that you have heard,  
Merry or sad, I add the parting word.  
Here on this narrow stage we act our plays,  
But in a wider field in coming days  
Are sterner toils, real battles to be fought,  
Great steeps to mount, a future to be wrought.  
And if this pageant of our joys and fears  
Has stirred your laughter or called forth your tears,  
Remember, yours is but the passing pleasure,  
Ours the possession of a lasting treasure.  
Long may the gods among their people dwell!  
With that I bow, and bid you all farewell.

# POEMS

SELECTED FROM THE WORK OF THE  
LOWEST FORMS.





### THE SKYLARK (ii.)

The skylark flew up into the air  
Singing a beautiful song.

“Skylark! Skylark! beautiful skylark,  
Teach me to sing your song.”

Up he flew—into the clouds,  
Till he was out of sight.

“Skylark! Skylark! come back, skylark,  
Come back—from your flight.”

**THE SHIP (i.)**

‘O ship with the white sail,  
Whither sail ye?’  
‘To the land beyond the horizon,  
O’er the deep blue sea.

Ilb. 11.

HAROLD HOCKEY.

**THE SHIP (ii.)**

Rolling, rolling, rolling  
O'er the deep blue sea,  
Always casting anchor  
At every port I see.

At last I come to a beautiful town  
With gates of silver and gold,  
And merchants riding on ostrich's backs  
With beautiful silks to be sold.

Iib. 10-1.

DAVID HAMSHERE.

## EVENSONG

I went to bed last night  
By the dim candle light,  
I heard the old church bell  
Go Pell, pell, pell.

After the bell ceased ringing  
I heard the choir-boys singing  
Their evening psalms,  
As they walked round carrying palms.

Then on the windows of glass,  
As each one seemed to pass,  
I saw the angels of God,  
Each one carrying a rod.

I Ib. 11-1.

CYRIL STUBBLEFIELD.

## THE BELL

The bell tolls out its chime,  
Deep and low ;  
It is just striking nine,  
To school I must go.

The bell tolls out its knell,  
Out of the dome ;  
It is just striking twelve,  
I must hurry home.

I. 10-11.

RAYMOND HODGES.



## THE SILVER BELL

In an ivied dell, of an old castel,  
That overlook'd the moat,  
Lay, where it fell, a silver bell;  
'Twas kept right well, when it sang pell-mell  
When the low notes rang mell-pell,  
Ting-a-ling, mell-pell, ting-a-ling, pell-mell.

Where the white owls dwell, lies the silver bell,  
Its owner is far away  
In the land where they sell, and make money well,  
But the silver bell, is content to dwell  
At the foot of the tower, where it sang pell-mell  
Ting-a-ling, pell-mell, ting-a-ling, mell-pell.

## EMELIE

There was a maid most beautiful,  
Her name was Emelie ;  
Her hair was braided down her back  
And fell down to her knee.

There were two men in the great stone tower  
Who gazed on Emelie,  
Picking sweet flowers both white and red  
To deck her head with glee.

Ila. 13-3.

RONALD BURN.

## INDOORS

When I go into the house  
I see a number of things,  
There are tables and chairs and cupboards and doors,  
And cups and spoons and rings.

Upstairs there are brushes and combs,  
And beds and dresses and lamps,  
And downstairs in the writing room  
There are pens and paper and stamps.

I Ib. 9-8.

ERNEST BLAND.

## HUNTING

The Carpet is the prairie,  
The Sofa is my horse,  
The Table is the mountain,  
The Chair a bush of gorse.

Up the mountain, round the gorse,  
Poor pussy is seen on the hill,  
With a pop and a bang my gun goes off,  
And we rush to examine our kill.

Poor pussy, she scampers away in her fright,  
And after her we run;  
Out of the door she goes with a hiss  
And I fire at her with my gun.

Iib. 10-1.

DAVID HAMSHERE.

## MY PORRINGER

It is my great delight  
To sit up in bed at night,  
In the flickering candle light,  
    With my little porringer.

Again, when morning comes,  
I sit and twiddle my thumbs,  
And wait till mother comes  
    With my little porringer.

What should happen if it break?  
I use it when I sleep and wake;  
Wherever I go I like to take  
    My chubby little porringer.

I. 10-10.

RAYMOND HODGES.



### THE VILLAGE GREEN.

One morn upon the village green,  
A tethered donkey stood.  
It's rope was wound around a post,  
And scanty was it's food.

Two little boys came home from school  
Upon that sunny day.  
They saw the donkey tethered there,  
And they heard the donkey bray.

Iib. 13-3.

CARL MEADOWS.

## THE CONDOR

In the heart of purple Andees  
Sails upon majestic wings  
The mighty condor. None but he  
Can sail into the cloudless heavens  
Half so high and far.  
He seems, like to the honey bee  
Upon the golden crownéd sunflower,  
A little speck in the blue fastnesses of heaven.  
And yet; with piercing eye  
He watches every movement of a hare upon the mountain.  
He scans each deep ravine, each rocky steep,  
Each lonely lake, each primrosed wood  
Wherein the mouse and squirrel play and gambol.  
He sees each antler'd stag,  
Each dappléd fawn, that lurks  
Within the resinous pine-tree's shade,  
Skipping and leaping o'er its joyous mother.

IIIb. 12-5.

ERIC ENNION.

## THE SOLITARY HEDGEHOG

When all the leaves are falling  
And not a bird is calling,  
Solitary, all alone;  
Crawls a little Hedgehog.

He goes to sleep in a snug little bed  
Which is made of leaves all brown and red,  
Solitary, all alone;  
Sleeps the little Hedgehog.

He rolls himself up into a ball  
Until he hears the gay spring call;  
Solitary, all alone;  
Wakes the little Hedgehog.

When the trees are turning green  
Then's the time that he is seen,  
Solitary, all alone;  
Just a little Hedgehog.

## THE FALL OF THE LEAF

The leaves fall fast,  
 By rude winds cast  
 Upon the crack'd and harden'd ground.  
 Their colours fade  
 To lighter shade,  
 They die unheeded all around.

The wind blows drear,  
 And far and near  
 It whirls the leaves in eddies brown,  
 And scatters fast  
 Upon its blast  
 The leafy carpet up and down.

Now everywhere,  
 Their old heads bare,  
 The trees away their garments fling.  
 Though leaves are dead  
 Hope is not fled,  
 'Twill come again with jocund Spring.

Brief reigns our Spring  
 To life we cling  
 As leaves to tree before they fall.  
 We fade away  
 As leaves decay  
 And Autumn's frost surprises all.

## APPENDIX

The passages of *Baldr's Death* and *Freyr's Wooing* here specified are the work of various composers, and are to be assigned according to this lettering.

- A. An individual other than the chief author, but of the same age or younger.
- B. A collaboration of boys out of school, but under the master's direction.
- C. A boy or a group of boys influenced unduly by the master.
- D. Classwork.

*Baldr's Death.*

Act I.	Sc. 1.	Concluding couplet ... ..	B
	Sc. 2.	'Frail Gerda's wreath now withering' 'Hark, I will make . . . from thy doom ... ..	C B
	Sc. 3.	Loki's Soliloquy ... ..	B
		Othinn's Soliloquy ... ..	A
		Wala's Song ... ..	B, possibly C
Act II.	Sc. 1.	Frigg's Song ... ..	B
	Sc. 2.	Baldr's 'Autumn Speech' ... ..	D
		'Tidings ye gods . . . upon the earth' 'Summer and song together on the hills' ... ..	D C
		The rest of Frey's speech ... ..	A
		'The Rag Scene' ... ..	B
Act III.	Sc. 1.	'But hark!'—to end of scene ...	A
	Sc. 2.	'Lo I am blind . . . . eternally' ...	A & D
		'But you a dripping cliff . . . . gloomy cloud' ... ..	A & B
		'Hearken to me . . . . . merry sport' ... ..	A
		Concluding speeches of all save Hodr, Frigg, Othinn and Bragi	A

*Freyr's Wooing.*

Sc. 1.	'Her arms are whiter . . . . . and left me sorrowing' ... ..	B
Sc. 2.	Beyla's Soliloquy ... ..	B
	'I mean the pig . . . . . team of goats' ... ..	B
Sc. 4.	'The boldest now . . . . . beneath my sword' ... ..	B
Sc. 5.	'O, summer's king . . . . . but would out-gift thee' ... ..	C
	Final couplet ... ..	C

NOTE.—The following names must not be confused :—

Freyr, also written Frey; the God of Summer.

Freyja, also written Freya; his sister, the Goddess of Beauty.

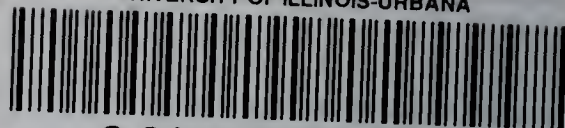
Frigg, also written Frigga; Mother of the Gods.



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